



The Colonel's Charge

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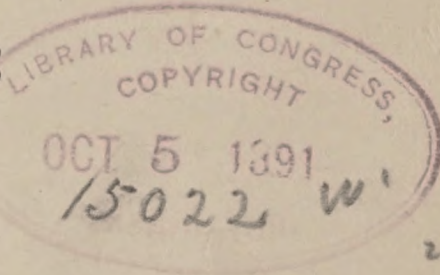
THE COLONEL'S CHARGE.

A COMPANION VOLUME TO
"THE LITTLE CORPORAL."

BY

CARLISLE B. HOLDING,

Author of "Her Ben," "The Little Corporal," and other War
Stories.



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THE COLONEL'S CHARGE.

Chapter I.

KILLED IN BATTLE.

“THERE has been a battle!”

In breathless haste, Ernest Henry rushed into the sitting-room, where Miss Lou Smith was busy with work for the Sanitary Commission Fair, to be held in Shepherdstown the next week. He came in without knocking, for he brought the daily paper just arrived on the morning train, and when on such an errand had been told not to pause for ceremony, nor to leave the paper at the door.

“Where?” asked Miss Smith, looking up quickly, and dropping her work to take the paper which Ernest was unfolding, that he might hand it to her with the telegraphic news from the battle-field prominent, and right under her eyes.

“I am not quite sure where—on the Tennessee River, though; and—and—” looking over

the paper hastily, stealing a glance, the meanwhile, at Miss Lou, who stood waiting his announcement; for he was bright and quick, and she knew from past experience that he would give her the gist of the news in a few words, and before she could find it in the paper if left alone. "And the Fourteenth was in it."

"The Fourteenth!" she exclaimed, sinking into her chair, and reading from Ernest's hesitation and continued folding and turning of the paper that he had a message he feared to deliver. "Tell me, Ernest, was—is there a list?—who—were—wounded—or—or—killed?"

Ernest dropped his papers on a chair, and, holding this one for Miss Lou up before his face, both arms outstretched, he made a pretense of hunting for the list of killed and wounded, the meanwhile choking back a sob. In spite of all his courage his lips quivered, and he said, chokingly: "Here's a list, Miss Lou, and—and—it says,—O, Miss Lou! he is—killed!"

"No, Ernest; no, no, no!—not that, Ernest! Let me see! Show me the place!"

With pallid face and trembling hands, Miss Lou took the paper and read where Ernest pointed; and under the heading, "Killed," she read: "Captain Smith, Company B, Fourteenth Regiment."

"My brother! my poor, poor brother! How

can I live!" she sobbed in tearful grief, and Ernest stood by, weeping silently, trying to think of something to comfort her.

"It is sometimes wrong, Miss Lou," he said at last, his hot tears blinding his eyes and dropping upon the bundle of papers he had again taken into his arms. He was not a newsboy nor paper-carrier, but from pure sympathy for those who had no one to go to the post-office or newsstand for them, had undertaken to deliver to all his neighbors, every noon, the daily papers from the city. He lived next door to Miss Lou, and was a great favorite with her.

"What's wrong?" she said, looking up, eagerly jumping at his meaning.

"The list," he said, drying his tears, for his own heart was comforted by the words he spoke to her.

"Is it ever?" she asked again. "Do you *know* that, Ernest? Has it ever been wrong, Ernest, that you know of?"

"Yes, Miss Lou, it has. When Cousin Dick was wounded at Donelson the paper said he was killed."

"And he was not killed at all?"

"No; only wounded."

"And the paper said he was killed?"

"Yes, Miss Lou, all the papers but one said he was killed."

"All but one! Which one was that, Ernest?"

"The *Journal*."

"And this is—" picking up the paper she had dropped.

"The *Tribune*," said Ernest.

"Get me a *Journal*, Ernest; go, right off, now that's a dear boy. How you comfort me, Ernest! I will not forget you—never!"

"I can not, Miss Lou; they do not come until six o'clock."

"Six o'clock! How long to wait! Will you get me one then, Ernest? If it says 'Wounded,' hire the hackman at the depot to drive you here; do n't wait to walk. I will pay you and him, too. Will you go to the depot, Ernest, and get one of the train-boy? Do not wait for the mail to come up and be opened. Do you think it will be different, Ernest?"

"Yes, Miss Lou, I do; may be not different in the *Journal*, but it will be different, I know."

"Do you, Ernest? God bless you, my boy, for your faith! You bright light of my loneliness, what would I do without you?"

Ernest turned to leave the room, and said: "What would we all do without you, Miss Lou? I am nothing."

"You are everything to me now, Ernest. You are my own brave boy."

Those were days of intense feeling, and when

mutual interests of the most precious kind made hearts warm and tender, and led to expressions of friendship and affection that seem extravagant in these quiet days—the war having closed a quarter of a century ago.

Ernest had so often heard Miss Lou praise him, and had so often been told how she loved him, that he was not disturbed by her warm words, nor by the momentary clasping of his face between her hands, as she begged him to hurry home with the *Evening Journal*.

When he had gone to carry his papers to the rest of his friends, she sat down to read the news of the battle at Pittsburg Landing, persistently putting aside as untrue that dreadful line that at first had smote her heart so sorely. Not until the *Journal* confirmed the news would she believe it.

All that afternoon she sat in the big chair, sorrowful but hopeful, surprising the scores of friends who had read the list in the morning papers and had come to condole with her, by her calmness and unfaltering faith in the better news to come. They shook their heads doubtfully, but she waited patiently, though at times tearfully, for the evening paper. She had no lack of company—a half-dozen ladies waited with her.

They heard the distant roar of the train as

it thundered through the deep cut at the outskirts of the town; they heard the nearer rumble and clatter of the cars as they swept across the bridge; they heard the sharp blast of the whistle, the clang of the bell, as it rang out the summons to all to hurry, for it would soon be gone; and then the puff! puff! of the engine starting again, and they knew suspense was over and in five minutes they would have the *Journal* in their hands.

Miss Lou did not leave the big chair, nor did any of the ladies speak as they listened to the coming train, and followed its fast-dying sounds as it rushed away. She hid her face in her hands, and silently prayed for grace to bear up, whatever the news should be.

Out in the street the hackman was urging his horses forward. First they sprang away from the depot in a brisk trot, under the lash, and as they turned off the main thoroughfare, they sped on by bounds, and finally settled to a full gallop. They were bearers of good news! Ernest sat by the driver—they two the only occupants of the bouncing, light, old-fashioned hack—and added his cheering words to the lashing whip.

A lady stood gazing out of the window at Miss Lou's house, peering down the street to see if she could catch a glimpse of Ernest coming.

"A runaway!" she screamed, as she saw the horses dashing toward her.

"Then he is safe!" Cried Miss Lou, springing from her chair to join her friend at the window.

"It is Ernest!" she said as the lad leaped from the hack-seat before the wheels had come to a stand-still at the door.

"It is so, Miss Lou!" he cried, rushing into the room. "The *Journal* says, Wounded!"

With this he spread the paper out on the table under the lamp, which had just been brought in, and showed all present the account of the first day's fight at Pittsburg Landing, in which was given a list of killed and wounded; and among the latter was the name of Captain Smith.

"How thankful I am!" Miss Lou said, brightening perceptibly under the good news.

"But are you not worried?" said one; "for see, who knows how severely he is hurt? It may be a mortal wound."

Instinctively Miss Lou turned to Ernest to hear his answer to this suggestion which came to her with unexpected terribleness.

"No," he said, turning to the paper, "for here is a list of 'Mortally Wounded.' His name is not there, but under 'The Wounded.'"

And with this answer they were all satisfied, and the company dispersed, leaving Miss

Lou alone with her housekeeper and her other help.

That night, as she knelt beside her bed before retiring, she prayed, out of a full heart: "I thank thee, Father in heaven, that my brother is not dead, but lives, though wounded. Be near him to comfort him and to sustain and to restore. Bring him to me again, Father of love! Let thy choicest blessing fall upon our dear friend, Ernest Henry. I thank thee for his faith and his love." And then she prayed for all the sore-hearted, the wounded and dying, the broken in spirit, the men who faced death for country's sake, and those who ruled at the Nation's Capital.

As she was about retiring the door-bell rang violently, and she waited in the hall above to hear what the caller wanted.

"A telegram, Miss Lou!" called the housekeeper, from below.

A telegram! What a cruel blow it dealt the suffering soul! It was from an acquaintance who was clerk in the adjutant-general's office at the State capital. He thought he was doing a kindness when he hastily wrote that message that night, and hurried it off on the lightning's wing:

"MISS LOU SMITH,—Captain Smith killed. HICKMAN."

As she read the fatal words she sank upon the stairs, at the foot of which she was standing,

and gasped for breath. She did not cry—not a tear relieved her agony. She did not sob; she could scarcely breathe. Finally she said with effort, her parched lips refusing almost to utter the words: “Send—for—Mrs. Henry—and—and—Ernest. Let—me—lie here—on the sofa—until they—come.”

They came. Others came. The pastor of the Church was sent for about midnight, and he came with a great heart full of sympathy. After the battle at Donelson he received just such a message, only it said, “Charlie Hopkins fell in the front rank at first fire,” and the light went out of his home, for Charlie was his only son.

“It is so kind of you to come,” Miss Lou said; “but you have your heart full of your own sorrow, without sharing mine.”

“Yes, I have my own sorrow, but there is still room for the trouble of any patriot mother or sister. This cruel, *cruel* war!”

“Ernest is all I have left now,” Miss Lou said, drawing the lad to a seat beside her. “We will not give up yet; will we, Ernest?”

She meant that though her brother was numbered with the dead, and though Ernest’s father had fallen at Belmont, they would still dare and do for the cause in which their loved ones had perished. Ernest understood her to mean she would not give up hope that the Captain yet

lived, and said, calmly: "No, indeed, Miss Lou, for I know he will come back."

"Not brother?" she asked eagerly.

"Yes, Miss Lou, the captain."

"I wish I had your hopefulness."

"Why so?" asked the pastor, addressing Ernest.

"The news in the paper is better than the word from Springfield, for the newspaper correspondent is on the field, and knows what he sends."

But this solution was not accepted as good, and the night wore away slowly, one by one leaving until Miss Lou was quite alone again. Exhausted, she fell asleep on her bed, undressed and unattended, awaking after the sun had been shining full in her face for several minutes, through the window left uncurtained in their excitement that night.



Chapter II.

DIRECT FROM THE FRONT.

IT was a beautiful morning. Earth was feeling the first touches of spring. The air was balmy, and the whole prospect of budding trees and flowering shrubs inspiring. Miss Lou walked to the window, pushed back the curtain, and sighed heavily, as she looked upon glad nature, and contrasted therewith the somberness and sadness of her own life. Coming up the street was none other than Hessie Hickman, the captain's friend, who had sent the telegram. Her eyes filled with tears as she watched him moving rapidly towards her home. As he drew nearer, and she noted the smile on his face and remarked how he stopped and shook hands with a neighbor he met, and even laughed, her heart was hardened toward him; for how could he laugh and be so happy-mannered when the man he professed to love so much as a friend was dead on the field of battle!

She hoped he would not stop. He would

have no tears to shed with her, and only such friends as could feel her sorrow did she care to see. But he did stop. She heard him ask for Miss Lou. She heard the maid show him to a seat in the parlor. She did not want to see him, but would go down.

"I will be there in a minute," she called from the hall, as the girl was coming up to tell her of his request to see her.

"Ah! Miss Lou," he said cheerfully, advancing to meet her, extending his hand; "I concluded, after I sent the message, to run over, myself. I caught the midnight train, and just got in."

She gave him her hand, but quickly withdrew it without returning the warm pressure with which he received it, and sank into a chair, sobbing convulsively.

"It is too bad," he said, softly and sympathetically, surprised at the intensity of her emotion, for he had always reckoned her as brave and strong, able to endure to the utmost.

She did not reply nor look up, but hid her face in her handkerchief and wept silently.

After a minute or two, Mr. Hickman ventured to remark consolingly:

"It is not so bad with you as with many, Miss Lou."

She shook her head, and after a little man-

aged to say, brokenly, from the folds of her handkerchief:

"How—could—it be worse!"

"Why," said her friend, hesitatingly, not knowing what was best to say, since her manner was so surprising to him; "why—he—might have been killed!"

"What is that?" she asked, looking at him for the first time, her hands clasped and in her lap, while she resolutely shut her lips tight together to keep back the great sob that nearly choked her, and her look was almost fierce in her eagerness to hear from his lips one little word of hope.

"He might have been killed," Mr. Hickman repeated.

"Might have been!" she exclaimed. "Might have been! I do not understand."

"Did you not get my message?" he asked excitedly.

"Yes, yes; and it was so cruel." She burst into tears and sobbed.

"Miss Lou, how was it cruel? I meant it to be a kindness."

"The paper said he was wounded," she said, with bowed head, "you said he was killed. My poor, poor brother!"

"I said he was killed! The paper said he was wounded! My dear Miss Smith, that is

a cruel mistake. Where is my telegram? Let me see it."

It was sent for, up-stairs, and Mr. Hickman walked the floor nervously while he waited for it, not seeking to unravel the mystery until he should have the paper in his hand. When he had read it, he said sadly:

"Ah! I see, my dear Miss Smith. How cruel this mistake! Let me tell you. The morning paper said the captain was killed; late in the day our office got positive word that he was only wounded. I wrote, hastily, this telegram, but I said: 'Captain Smith is *not* killed.' I saw no paper that said he was wounded, and I wanted you to be relieved at once; so I sent the message, and am now here to say he is *not* killed, but only wounded, and not mortally wounded at that."

"Not killed!" she said, looking at Mr. Hickman as he stood before her; and then her face lighted up with a smile. "Forgive me," reaching out her hand to him, "for doubting you. I saw you gay and cheerful when I was broken-hearted, and I rebelled against your heartlessness. Forgive me for brother's sake."

"Please do not mention it. I do not blame you. No, no, Miss Smith, my heart was broken, all day, until the good news came, and then I sent it to you."

"Did you not see the *Evening Journal*?"

"I saw only the morning papers."

"And, are you sure?"

"O yes; the message came direct to our office from the colonel himself."

"Where is brother? Can I go to him?"

"Not now perhaps, but soon. I am going."

"You!"

"Yes: I have leave of absence. Indeed the governor has commisioned me to go as a relief agent for all Illinois troops."

"And may I go with you?" she pleaded.
"Do say I may!"

"I will send for you, but must hurry on alone first. I could not go, though, without coming over to get your message to the captain."

"A telegram, Miss Lou," called the house-keeper, who had answered the bell before it was rung, for she saw the messenger coming, and had the door open when he arrived.

With eager haste she tore open the envelope, and read:

"MISS LOU SMITH,—Good cheer. The day is ours. Wounded, but comfortable. Will save my leg, I guess.

"SMITH."

"Now I know!" she said joyfully. "Send for Ernest. Bless his dear soul! He was a bright star in my night."

Ernest came, and so did his mother. All the

neighbors came. They all rejoiced, and well they might, for Shepherdstown had sent to the war no nobler man than Captain Smith.

Two weeks from that time he was brought home, accompanied by Miss Lou, who had braved many dangers, and endured much toil to get to him. She had prevailed upon the officers in charge to grant him a furlough to come North, and had brought him home to nurse him back to health and wait on him until the shattered bone in his leg should knit again.

Two other officers of the same company came a few days afterward. One was wounded as was the captain; the other was wrapped in his country's flag, and was borne to the cemetery and laid to rest, free from war's alarms—his name enrolled on the tablet of fame in that quiet but patriotic town.

The weeks slipped by; the months lengthened into a year. The captain's wound healed, but he limped visibly and painfully. He put aside his soldier's garb, and was again in his office at the store, watching the progress of the struggle, and longing to join again in the fray.

Ernest was given a place in the captain's office, but every noon he carried his papers to his friends, and cheered them by his bright and hopeful manner.

Thus it was in the spring of 1864, when the President called for soldiers to serve a short term of three or four months.

"Here's my chance!" the captain said to Miss Lou, as he read her the President's call.

"How so?" she asked anxiously. "You can not walk a mile without help."

"Very true; but I can ride. I will raise a regiment, and go as colonel."

"But can you?"

"Wait and see!" he said enthusiastically.

That very night found him in Springfield, and the next day he returned with a commission to raise a regiment of troops for the short term.

"Brother," Miss Lou said, as he was making arrangements to go away to join the regiment in rendezvous, "could we adopt Ernest as a brother?"

"Perhaps. Some one to take our Oswald's place?"

"Yes. Ernest is so bright; he is affectionate and deserving. Can you adopt a brother as well as people can adopt children as sons or daughters?"

"I do not know," he said, smiling; "never thought of it before."

"Will you think about it, and let me know?"

"Yes; but I can not attend to it now. It

takes some time; it must go through the courts."

"Well, as soon as you come back?"

"Yes; if all goes well."

"Dear Oswald!" Miss Lou said, with a sigh. "The remembrance of him that night on the river will always abide with me."

"Yes, yes," said the colonel (for he was colonel now), sighing sadly; "that cry we heard in the darkness will never cease to ring in my ears—'Up, papa, up! Mamma, up!'"

"He would be older than Ernest," Miss Lou said, meditatively.

"Yes, he would be nearly of age now," the colonel said.

"Do you think he lives?" she asked softly.

"Sometimes I think so. Every bright stranger of about that age who comes into the store, and looks anything like our folks, gives me a little shock. I say, 'May be he is Oswald!'"

"Do you? So do I, when I see one on the street."

"That makes me think he lives, or God would not put such thoughts into our minds."

"Would you begrudge him his third?"

"Now, sister!"

"I know you would not, brother; but think what a comfortable amount it would be for a young man."

“So it would—several thousand.”

“Will you think about the other matter?—
Ernest, I mean.”

“Yes; but I would rather find Oswald.”

And thus the matter rested when Colonel
Smith went to take command of his regiment.



Chapter III.

SOME SOLDIERS TRUE.

AT Mattoon, where the regiment had been ordered to assemble for organization, ten companies were in camp, each pledged to Colonel Smith, so that he had nothing to do but to assume command.

In one of these companies were two boys—Babbitt Carl and Jakey Jacobus, schoolmates and firm friends when at home, and now united in heart and purpose, and banded together for mutual help and confidences.

Jakey's mother was illiterate, and that fact worried him. He could not write to her, nor receive a letter from her, except by calling in the help of a third person. His father was killed in the battle of Shiloh, or Pittsburg Landing. This shock had almost unseated Mrs. Jacobus's reason. She had many friends among the citizens, but the most intimate were Mr. and Mrs. Carl and the family of Judge Lawrence—especially his daughter, Miss Laura; for their sym-

pathies had been enlisted in her behalf when the news came that her husband was a sacrifice on the altar of patriotism. Now that Jakey was gone to be a soldier, they gave her unusual attention and care.

At Babbitt's suggestion a circle was formed, consisting of himself and Jakey, his mother and Jakey's mother, the object of which was correspondence. Their secret was to consist in Mrs. Jacobus's inability to read or write. Out of sympathy for her, Jakey was not to write either, but Babbitt was to do all the correspondence.

When free from daily drill or routine camp duty, Babbitt and Jakey were constantly together.

The soldiers who were guards about the camp belonged to the invalid corps. This was an organization that consisted of able-bodied men, so far as general health was concerned, who had served honorably at the front, but were entitled to discharge on account of a missing arm, a missing leg, or some wound that disabled them from performing the full duty of a soldier.

Babbitt and Jakey were delighted when they were admitted to the little frame building that served as head-quarters for the guards, to listen to the stories of the veterans about their army experiences.

"When I was at Shiloh," said one, as he com-

menced a recital of his experience there, and Jakey started, laid his hand on Babbitt's arm, and looked the thought his lips would utter.

"His father was at Shiloh," Babbitt said, interrupting the speaker and nodding toward Jakey.

"He was! What regiment?"

"The Fourteenth," said Jakey, a bright spot appearing in each cheek as he spoke the words his heart cherished so fondly.

"He was, eh? Knew Colonel Smith then, I guess," the veteran said inquiringly.

"No, for it was Colonel Hall's regiment."

"So I know; but Smith was in it. He was captain then."

"And did you know Colonel Smith then?" asked Babbitt, feeling a little bound of his heart as he learned that their colonel had been at the front, and had seen real service.

"You bet! Our regiment was brigaded with the Fourteenth."

Just then the door was darkened by the form of a timid-appearing, yet fine-featured youth, who hesitated about joining the group inside, as they sat around on empty cracker-boxes. Babbitt and Jakey looked up, and the chief speaker said:

"Come in, boy. You must get some of that shyness off, if you are to be a soldier."

Thus invited, and urged by implied suspicion of courage, the youth stepped inside and backed up against the side of the room, and stood an eager listener to the conversation.

"Did you see our colonel in that fight?" asked Babbitt, anxious to bring the soldier to the story he had in mind.

"Did I? If I had n't I would n't have had this," and he picked up his empty coat-sleeve and shook it at the boys.

"Tell us about him."

"He did his duty like a man, and for pay took home a shattered leg. That is all there is to it. What more could you ask?"

"I reckon you never knew my father?" asked Jakey timidly, swallowing hard from embarrassment as well as from strong emotion.

"What was his name?"

"Jacobus."

"Yes, I did. Queer, is n't it now? but I did, for a fact. I'll bet there was no other fellow of that name in all the regiment. Jacobus—Jacobus—Jacobus—yes, that's it; the very same. He was n't in Smith's company; no, he was in the one from about Oconee, somewhere. I saw him fall. The next volley took this," shaking his sleeve, "and I went to the rear. Did he die?"

"Yes," said Jakey, and turned away to hide the tears that fell down his face.

For a minute there was dead silence, after which another veteran spoke:

"General Grant commanded there."

"Yes, and the very ground we are on now is where he took command of his regiment, the old Twenty-first."

"Right here!" said Babbitt excitedly.

"Right on this spot. I have not a bit of doubt he has been in this very shanty—was his head-quarters, maybe."

"What's that?" asked another veteran, at that moment stepping into the room.

"We were just saying General Grant took hold of the old Twenty-first right here."

"You are right. I was in that regiment myself, and remember seeing him come into camp here, wearing a blue blouse and slouch hat, smoking a cigar, and looking like a farmer seeing the sights."

"Not much of a farmer about him!" put in another, enthusiastically.

"Now you are talking! So the fellow thought that walked up to him, and slapped him on the shoulder, and said; 'Old man, how are you any way?' He took him for a sucker. Old Grant turned about, and without taking his cigar out of his mouth, said to two fellows following behind, 'Guard-house!' The next instant the old Twenty-firster was hustled off to the pen.

Grant walked around, ordered the captains here and there, never smiled, never said a word but to issue an order, sent a dozen fellows to the guard-house, and by night everybody said, 'We've caught a Tartar.'

"You bet!" agreed the others.

"Up to that time," the veteran continued, "everybody did as he pleased. After that 'most everybody did as the colonel pleased."

"And you footed to Quincy!" exclaimed one.

"Every step! Trains running right through, and anxious to carry Uncle Sam's boys; but the old fellow said we could walk, and walk we did."

"Did n't hurt you?" said the Fourteenth man.

"Hurt us! Made men of every one of us."

"Was he severe on you?"

"No; gentle as a woman, except when the boys tried to run things. At Springfield, where we stopped over night on the way to Quincy, a lot of the boys sneaked out of camp, and went to the city for 'a time.' When they came back, two or three o'clock in the morning, straggling in by twos and threes, who was standing at the only place they could get in but old Grant himself? Says he, gentle and commonplace-like: 'What's your name?' Then each fellow up and told him, for they all knowed him in the moonlight. Well, he just says to every feller: 'Turn in now, for it's past time.' They 'lowed

they were comin' off mighty easy. But the next day, instead of moving on we staid right there, and had dress parade. And bless my stars if the adjutant did n't read every name off, and the fellows stepped out in front, and the next thing they knowed every one of them was hanging by his thumbs to a limb of a tree. We went on, but after that there was no sneaking out at night while he staid with us."

"He did n't stay long."

"No; too much in him to stay with us."

"I wonder if Colonel Smith knew father," ventured Jakey.

"May be," assented the man from the Fourteenth.

"Did your father go, too?" said a soldier addressing the awkward youth who stood backed up against the side of the house.

"He would have gone if he had had a chance."

"So you are going for him."

"No; I am going for myself. I have nobody else to go for."

As he said this, Babbitt and Jakey passed out; for it was nearly time to "mount guard," and they wanted to witness that ceremony.

"No father, eh?" queried the old soldier.

"No, I guess not—never saw him."

"Whose company are you in?"

"Captain Mooney's."

"Same as those two boys just gone out?"

"Yes; but they do not know me—not much."

"What might your name be?"

"Thee—Theodore Tompkins."

"Well, Thee," said the soldier, rising and extending his hand, "success to you! Those are peart boys, and that Babbitt's a hummer. Get in with him, and you will be all right. Jakey's pap was in the same regiment as the colonel, and like as not the colonel will have a warm spot for him. Soldiers are queer that way."



Chapter IV.

PROMOTION.

COLONEL SMITH and his sister, Miss Lou, went to the camp at Mattoon before the regiment was organized, and visited among the officers, and studied the men and boys as they leisurely passed through the grounds in the cool of the evening; and in this way knew some of them by sight, though they did not know their names.

Walking slowly toward the outer guard-line, they met Theodore, who was himself walking slowly toward barracks from the guard headquarters. His manner first, and his face afterward, attracted their attention, and they gazed at him until he looked up and caught their eye, when they turned their heads—but not until his features had been photographed on their minds, and their hearts touched by something pathetic in his expression, and their souls aroused by a bearing that seemed more noble than his garb would lead them to expect.

"Do you know him, brother?" she asked.

"No; but," and he laughed gently, "his is another of those faces that make me think of Oswald."

"And yet, brother, we have been deceived so often that we surely are not again going to jump at straws."

"So we have agreed, you know."

"And yet both of us are breaking our agreement every chance we find to do so!"

"That is so. Well, suppose we quit, and give our attention to somebody we *know* is no relative of ours, and can by no possibility be Oswald!"

"Just so—Ernest, for instance."

"Yes, Ernest; or, for that matter, a boy in Captain Mooney's company. His father was in the Fourteenth, and was killed at Shiloh, the captain tells me; his mother is bereft of reason almost, and the boy is deserving."

"Have you seen him?"

"Yes, the captain pointed him out to me yesterday."

"And how were you impressed?"

"Well enough; but there was a young fellow with him that took my eye completely."

"Not another Oswald?" and she laughed reprovingly.

"No, not another Oswald, for Captain Mooney

has known him since he was a babe, and knew his parents before that."

"What has that to do with your Shiloh boy?"

"Well, just this: They are bosom friends, and when I suggested to the captain to name the Shiloh boy for corporal, he shook his head doubtfully, and said he already had the other one down for that. So you see if 'Shiloh' can not get it, his next friend will, and that will be something."

"Folks do not usually look upon their friends' promotion as an honor to themselves, do they, when candidates for the same place?"

"Not exactly; but I think 'Shiloh' will."

"Are you going to call him 'Shiloh' all the time? That's a nickname."

"So it is. Well, here is his real name. The captain gave it to me on this card—and the other boy's, too."

He drew out of his pocket a card on which were written the names, "Jakey Jacobus (Shiloh), Babbitt Carl (Shiloh's friend)," and handed it to his sister.

"So the captain speaks of him as 'Shiloh,' and the other as 'Shiloh's friend,'" she said, as she saw the manner in which each was distinguished.

"Not exactly. I wrote that myself. Do n't you see it is my writing?"

"Will you find out the other young man's name?" she asked.

"Which?"

"The one we just passed."

"Now, sister! Where is our agreement not to chase shadows and jump at straws?"

"But it will do no harm to know who he is."

"I will see about it, he added meditatively; and saluting the guard, the colonel and his sister passed out and walked silently to their hotel uptown, and their thoughts were exactly the same, though they did not disclose them to each other.

As for Theodore, he went back to the barracks, disturbed in mind by what he had heard at a second visit to the guard head-quarters; for the veterans had been telling of the daring of some soldiers, and the rapid promotions earned by deeds of valor. He was full of a burning desire to do something heroic. He wanted to prove to all that he was not of mean parentage; and if he should succeed in that, by doing some worthy act, and did not die in the doing, he wanted to be promoted. He resolved to let not one opportunity pass to distinguish himself. The story of the veteran had fired his heart.

"Now there is 'Little Phil' Sheridan," the veteran had said; "he started out as captain of cavalry. Great guns! He made his company equal to a regiment every time. He rushed, he

cut right and left, he wheeled and charged again, and swept the field as a whirlwind! What came of it? Why, this: Somebody told the governor of Michigan that that captain was too big for his boots—to say nothing of his shoulder-straps. What did old Governor Blair do? He just wrote out a commission as colonel of cavalry, and sent a man straight down to the Tennessee River, to give 'Little Phil' his first lift. Now see where he is! The biggest man in the Shenandoah, and no telling where he will end."

"That's pretty well told," said another, as Theodore had stood there drinking in every word; "but I can match it. At the battle of Chickamauga an Illinois regiment had every officer killed or wounded. Now, that's pretty big; but I have the papers what'll prove it. Well, when the colonel, the lieutenant-colonel, the major, every captain, every lieutenant, first and second, were killed, or wounded, or captured, blame my stars, if the orderly sergeant of one of the companies did n't get on the colonel's horse and take the battalion through as pretty as you ever seed. Where is he to-day?"

"Colonel of the regiment," suggested one.

"No: on a major-general's staff—forget which one—drawing his little five dollars a day, and riding a prancing steed. That I saw myself."

"Well, you need n't go so far from home. Now, here is Colonel Smith himself. Just yesterday, so to speak, he was an infantry captain, to-day a colonel."

"And he deserves it," said one.

"That's the square thing," said the Fourteenth man. "I saw him, myself, gobble up a whole regiment of rebels at Shiloh, with his one company, before he got it in the leg."

"Hold on, Hank. That's a little strong. Not a whole regiment!"

"You may have my head for a foot-ball if it was n't."

"A thousand men!" said one dersively.

"A thousand nothing!" replied the Fourteenth man, scornfully. "The old Fourteenth had been peppering it to 'em for four hours, and there were n't more 'n a dozen left; but he took 'em in, just the same, and it counts a regiment in the report."

"Well whether he captured that regiment or not," suggested a veteran, "he has captured *this* regiment."

"Correct! Bag and baggage."

"Hearts and heads!" chimed in another admirer.

"Boots and breeches!" said Hank.

"And there he comes now, with his sister," remarked one.

At this Theodore withdrew, and walked in the direction of the colonel, intending, when near, if unobserved, to take a good look at the man who had been so brave in battle, and so true at home, as to have only friends among soldiers and among his neighbors. But when he looked up, the colonel and his sister were gazing at him, and he reckoned it was because he was so meanly clad. He went to his quarters, determined to achieve a name that even the colonel would respect. He did not wait long for an opportunity.

The next day after the election of company officers, Captain Mooney announced the names of the non-commissioned officers of his company, and among the corporals he read the name of Babbitt Carl, much to that young man's surprise.

Then Theodore recalled what the old soldier had told him about Babbitt, and as he saw him receive this first promotion, he believed the veteran was right when he described him, in language more expressive than elegant, as "a hummer."



Chapter V.

A WIDENING CIRCLE.

AMONG those who most heartily congratulated Babbitt on his selection as corporal, none was more sincere in expressions of gladness than Jakey. Others, perhaps, were more demonstrative, and expressed themselves in better language; but for Babbitt the warm pressure of Jakey's hand, and the silent but eloquent language of his eyes, attested more than the words of the many.

That night, when they were alone in their bunks, and all the others were asleep, they talked together of what had happened, and of what the future perhaps would bring to them, as only kindred spirits can talk.

There was a very wide difference between the home-life of Babbitt and the home-life of Jakey; and yet, since they had entered into their compact, there seemed to be no difference between the hearts of the boys. So the hours

of the night wore on, and they still were not asleep, but talking in tones that would not disturb their comrades, and planning for the future.

The future for them had only good. They could not foresee any of the dangers or trials which older heads would have dreaded; they did not reckon upon the possibilities of even the short time they had engaged to serve the Government as soldiers. The one thing that they thought most about, and talked most of, was their return home when the term of service had been completed.

Finally, Jakey said hesitatingly, as if he were not sure that what he was about to say would meet with Babbitt's approval: "I think, maybe, we might take in some other of the boys in our circle."

Babbitt did not reply at once, for it had been a strong desire in his mind that there should be only the four—himself, Jakey, Jakey's mother, and Babbitt's mother; but after thinking for a moment or two, and recalling that it would add to Jakey's pleasure, if not his own, to accede to his request, he said warmly, as though heartily approving of the project:

"Why, certainly; but who is there that you know that would like to become one of our circle?"

Jakey's reply was rather unsatisfactory, for he said :

"Indeed, I do n't know his name ; but I do know that he has no friends ; he told me so. He said if he ever had a father and mother he does n't know it ; that he had run away from the man he was living with, and came to our town just as the company was being formed, and put his name down just because he did n't know what else to do, and was just as willing to go as to stay ; and that he did n't care whether he ever came back or not, for he had nothing to come back to. Then I thought maybe if we would take him into our circle, that he would feel happier, and that he would be glad with us when the time came to come back."

Babbitt's heart was touched with this brief recital of the past life of the unknown comrade, so he said again :

"Certainly, certainly ; if we can take him into our circle, and make his life any more happy, we will do it ; for we do n't expect always to be soldiers. The war will end by and by ; and it may be, when we are grown to be men, after the war, we shall be glad that we are kind to this boy now. But do you know his name?"

"No," Jakey said, "I do n't know his real name. He calls himself 'Theodore;' the boys

call him 'Thee' for short—those that know him."

"But where did he come from? Who is he?"

"I don't know who he is, nor where he came from; only that he seems to want to do right, and seems very sad and lonely."

Babbitt didn't know what more could be said or done then; so, turning over, as if he would go to sleep, he said, under his blanket, in a low tone:

"All right, Jakey; in the morning we will see about this."

Jakey and Babbitt were soon fast asleep and dreaming—not of their present surroundings, but of their homes and of the future, and of the work that they expected to do then, and of the men they expected to be.

They were genuinely surprised the next day, after having talked with this unknown comrade, who was unknown to them now no more—for they had taken him into their circle, and had learned that his name, or the name that he went by, was Theodore Tompkins—by receiving a letter from Laura Lawrence, in which she said that Mrs. Carl had told her of the plan the boys had made to form a circle for correspondence and mutual help.

Babbitt was just a little bit nettled at first; for he had promised Jakey that his mother

would never divulge their secret, and he could not understand how it was that she had violated the confidence that he had in her. He put down her letter, as he was reading it, and before he had finished it, and said to himself:

“It can not be; I never knew mother to do such a thing as that before.”

Jakey was standing by and overheard the remark, and, naturally enough, asked what he meant.

Babbitt was, for a moment, confused by this question from Jakey, for he had already made up his mind that he would not tell him that his mother had divulged the secret; but, recovering himself, he said:

“Why, I may just as well be frank with you, Jakey; mother has let our secret out, and here is a letter from Miss Laura, which says she knows all about it.”

It was now Jakey's turn to be surprised, and he was somewhat abashed; for he did n't desire it to be generally known that his mother could not read or write. The boys looked at each other in silence for a moment, one blushing because his mother had, as he supposed, violated the confidence reposed in her, and the other blushing because his mother had so little knowledge as not to be able to read or write.

Babbitt picked up the letter and continued

to read. He had gone but a few lines when he smiled broadly, and said:

"O, I see how it is. It could not be helped after all. Let me read you what Miss Laura says." Then he read these words:

"I know you boys will be surprised when I tell you that Mrs. Carl told me of your secret; and perhaps you will think she ought not to have done so; but you will see how it happened when I tell you that I called at her house, and she was just reading aloud a letter that you had written her, and when I came in she said: 'O, I need not mind you, Miss Laura. I was just reading a letter from Babbitt to his father, and perhaps I had just as well read on;' so, without knowing what she was coming to, she read on, and read what you had said about the little circle you desired to form, and about what the secret of it should be."

After reading so far, Babbitt said:

"Well, that excuses mother. But see how she has let our secret be known to others than Miss Laura; for did n't she say here that father was listening too?"

By this time Jakey had recovered his thoughts, and he had also no condemnation for Babbitt's mother for the unintentional divulging of their little secret, for he said:

"But see, Babbitt, we have done just what

we have been blaming them for doing. *We* have told Theodore, and taken him in; so we can't object because *they* have told somebody. But is that all Miss Laura has said about it?"

"Well, I will see," said Babbitt, taking up the letter again, and glancing hurriedly down the written page. "No, that is not all. See here: she says *she* wants to join our circle. What do you say to that, Jakey?"

"Well, I am willing; ain't you?" he replied.

"Well, I should say!" said Babbitt. "But who would have thought that a little society we formed among ourselves would grow like this? There must be something good in it. Perhaps it may grow more than we think, and become something of importance afterward,"—scarcely knowing himself what he meant by the "something" that this organization should become in the future.

"Well," he said, "I suppose, before we take father and mother and Miss Laura in, we must tell Theodore of it, for he is one of us now."

"Certainly," said Jakey, "Theodore must know; for though we have a secret among ourselves, we must have no secret from each other."

So Theodore was called up, and the matter was laid before him, and he said:

"Boys, it is not for me to say. I can't ob-

ject to any of your folks coming into the circle, and I would not if I could. You have taken me in without knowing who I am, and I am sure I can trust you to take in your own folks and friends."

"Very well," Babbitt said; "then let us understand that our circle now consists of us three boys, our fathers and mothers, and Miss Laura."

"Perhaps not quite that," said Theodore; "your fathers and mothers, but not mine." And he betrayed more feeling than the boys had expected to see him show under the circumstances. Babbitt replied quickly:

"Yes, yours too. May be they are living somewhere; and if they only knew of this little society, would n't they be glad to join?"

Theodore shook his head doubtfully. "It may be that they are living; I oftentimes think that they must be. I never knew anything of them."

Jakey looked up in surprise, as if a new idea had dawned in his mind.

"You do n't suppose that you were gypsied, do you?"

"Gypsied? O, I can't tell. I have often thought perhaps I was."

"But can't you remember anything about where you came from?"

"No; I remember nothing except that I always lived with Farmer Jenkins, and they always told me that I was not their boy. Where I came from I can't tell. Whether my father and mother are living I don't know. What my name is I don't know."

"Well, how did it happen that you were called Theodore Tompkins, when you always lived with Mr. Jenkins?"

"They found the name in a book, they said, and thought it was a good name; and they didn't want to call me by their own name, so they always called me that."

"Well, that is a queer idea, I must say. Who is this Farmer Jenkins? Does he live near our place?"

"No, not very near; about twenty-five miles from there. I got tired of staying with him, so one day, after he had abused me, I ran away and came to your place, just in time to join the company. Don't you remember, I told you before?"

"Yes," said Babbitt, "I remember now. How old are you, Theodore?"

"I don't know; I suppose I am about seventeen years old. How can I tell?"

"Well, how many years back can you remember?" asked Jakey?"

"Well, I can remember about—about four-

teen years," said Theodore, after thinking a minute or two. "That is the way it seems to me. I can remember them talking about things when I was a little boy that I have learned by reading happened about that long ago. So I suppose I am about seventeen. I could hardly remember things before I was three years of age, could I?"

"Well, never mind about that," said Babbitt; "we are going to suppose that your father and mother are living; and, if they are, we are going to have them members of our society."

"By the way," said Babbitt, as if he were utterly surprised and astonished at his own thought, at the same time giving Jakey a vigorous slap on the shoulder.

"Well, what is new now?" said Jakey. "What has struck *you*?"

"Why, just to think that we have such a big job on hand for our society when we get home!"

"I don't understand you," said Jakey. "What kind of a job—something that we have n't talked about?"

"Of course something that we have n't talked about. You see Theodore here, don't you?"

"Yes. What of that?"

"Well, he has a father and a mother somewhere, has n't he?"

"May be so; but what of that?"

"Well, now, you must be slow! I thought you would see before I had a chance to tell you."

"See what?"

"See the work that this society of ours can do when we get home."

Theodore had listened, and had intuitively divined the meaning of Babbitt. Jakey was slower to see the drift of his remarks, so that Babbitt was obliged to explain.

"Well, Theodore's father and mother are living, I am sure, though I don't know. He belongs to our society. We are now members, we three, and the work that we must do—do n't you see?—will be, all hands of us, to help him find his father and mother."

"Tip-top!" said Jakey; "first-rate! That is what we will do. My! I wish the war was over now, so that we could go home!"

Theodore was surprised and delighted, and for a moment he felt happier than he had ever known himself to be; for he had not only found friends in Jakey and Babbitt, but he had found sincerest sympathizers and willing helpers to do what he had always longed to do—search for his parents, feeling certain they must have been searching for him.

"That will be something for us to write about right away," said Babbitt.

"Certain," said Jakey.

"And that," continued Babbitt, "will be something that Miss Laura will delight in. Is n't it a good thing that she did find out about this society, and has asked to become a member of our circle?"

"It looks that way now," said Jakey.

"Who would have thought," urged Babbitt, "when we were talking together about writing letters home, and about forming a little circle of our own, that any such great work as this would have come to us to do?"

"And who would have thought," said Theodore, "when I came to your place and joined a company, desiring, most of all, that I might, some day, get into a batttle and be killed, that I should so soon change my mind and long to live a little while longer?"

"Well, that only proves," said Babbitt, "that we do n't know, from one day to another, what is going to happen, or, as the Bible says, what a day may bring forth."

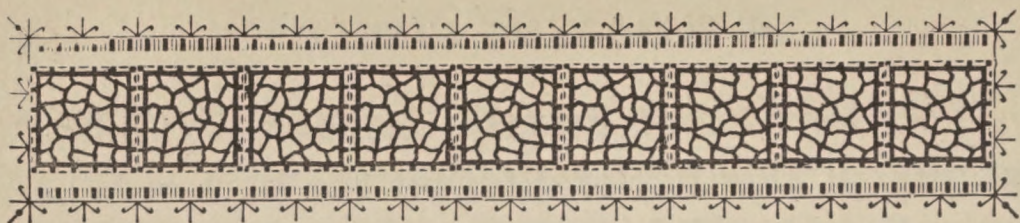
Theodore looked at Babbitt for a moment, and then asked, hesitatingly: "Do you believe the Bible?"

"Why, certainly," said Babbitt. "Why should n't I? Every word of it; it is all true."

"Well, I do n't," said Theodore, turning about.

The boys were greatly shocked, especially Babbitt, at this declaration on the part of Theodore that he did n't believe in God's Word. Theodore walked away, and left Jakey and Babbitt standing alone, quite dazed and quite crest-fallen at this sudden turn in affairs.

Fortunately, Babbitt and Jakey promised to watch the fire under the boiling beans that night; for the old cook said they should be extra fine if baked all night and watched to keep them from burning,—and they intended to have a quiet talk while at work.



Chapter VI.

THE NIGHT-WATCH.

PROMPTLY at eight o'clock the boys reported, as they had promised, for duty as watchers beside the fire. It added much to their satisfaction to know that the rest of the company had sought their bunks early that night; for they had feared that their quietness would be disturbed by some of their comrades insisting on sharing their labors with them.

Night had brought a decided change in the temperature, as was often the case at that time of the year in that locality. The day had been intensely warm; but with the going down of the sun, a brisk northwest wind sprang up, and sweeping across the broad expanse of prairie, yet cold from the frosts of the past winter, made heavy garments a necessity for comfort.

Babbitt and Jakey further provided against any uncomfortableness by stretching a blanket across one corner of the rudely-constructed frame that was to receive the covering of tree-

boughs. In this way they were sheltered from the wind, and made comfortable by the bright fire that burned in the pit just before them.

Before taking his leave, the cook gave minute instructions as to how his precious pot of beans was to be attended to. The pot was not an ordinary one for size, but such a one as only soldiers were accustomed to see swung from the fire, and of such ample dimensions as to hold a bushel or more of beans, besides the necessary water in which to boil them. No less a vessel would have been sufficient to provide the mess for the company of seventy-five men, and the cook very wisely counted on sharpened appetites for the morrow's dinner after they had inhaled the delicious odor of the well-done food, seasoned as he had in mind to season it.

It may not be uninteresting to know some of the task before the boys for the night. These are the instructions the cook gave them:

"Now, boys, the first thing will be to roll up one of them pork-barrels 'longside this pit; and the next thing, you had better fill it half to the top with water from the well down there."

"That is easily done," said Babbitt.

Going over to the Commissary Department, where a dozen or more empty pork-barrels were piled up against the building, he and Jakey procured one of them, and rolled it across the inter-

vening space to the side of the pit. Gathering up some of the smaller camp-kettles, they started for the well, to get the water as directed. When they returned, and had emptied the contents of their kettles into the barrel, Jakey's curiosity to know what could be the use of such proceedings, made him ask:

"What is the need of all this water, cook?"

"For the beans, to be sure," he said. "Don't suppose you can bile a bushel or two of beans without water?"

It was Babbitt's turn to be surprised, if not horrified; for the barrel was anything but clean. In all the crevices there were quantities of salt, and clinging to the sides were particles of fat meat, while on the bottom were several smaller pieces that had been thought too insignificant to take out and issue to the men as rations. He was about to overturn the barrel and pour the water to the ground, saying, as he grasped it for that purpose:

"Well, we must clean the barrel first; we can't use this dirty barrel."

When the cook exclaimed indignantly:

"Dirty! What do you call dirt? Is salt pork dirt? Is salt dirt? Hain't you been eatin' the meat that came out of that barrel? Will the water be any dirtier? Besides, the salt and what meat is there will help season the beans.

Lots more of that kind of stuff to be put into the pot yet!"

Babbitt saw that remonstrance would be useless, so there remained only the one thing to do, and that was to follow the directions of the cook, and continue to bring the water until the required amount was at hand.

When this task was done, although his appetite for the beans was considerably marred by what he regarded a very careless way of preparation for their cooking, he determined to stand by his post and do his duty, as he had promised to do, and depend for the hunger of the next day to make palatable what now seemed to him perfectly nauseating.

"We will just swing another kettle on to the fire here," said the cook. "I will hold the pole up; you boys swing the kettle down. That is right. Now fill this pot with water out of the barrel, and build a rousing fire under it here, and get it hot, and keep it bilin'. Now, mind you, the fire must be kept burning under *this* kettle of water, and as fast as the coals are made, you rake them over under t' other kettle, where the beans are; and see that they are jist kept simmerin'—not bilin', but jist simmerin', like they are now. Then you must jist keep dipping out of the kettle of bilin' water and pouring it onto them—jist so they do n't burn. Now, that is

all you have got to do; but that is enough, I allow, to keep you pretty busy—keepin' up this fire, and keepin' this kettle bilin', and keepin' them beans a-simmerin', and keepin't he coals raked over,—that will be enough to keep you awake, I reckon. Now, jist keep your wits about you; and if you a'tend to this half right, you will think to-morrow's dinner—why, a king never had a fitter meal."

With a parting look into the pot of simmering beans, and a parting stir of the fire under the pot of water, the old cook bade the boys good-night, and went to his quarters, intending to relieve them, as he had said, "when the cock should crow for the mornin'."

There was something so unusual about this work that Babbitt was secretly glad that he had undertaken the task for the novelty of the thing, not to speak of the opportunity it would give him of talking confidentially with Jakey for several hours—not to say the whole night, if the cook should so forget himself as not to come to them until the morning should dawn, indeed. They had just seated themselves on upturned camp-kettles for stools, when Jakey said:

"It seems to me, Bab, it is n't just right for us two to be out here having this fun—for 't is fun, you bet!—and the other one of us know nothing about it."

"The other one of us?" asked Babbitt.
"What other one?"

"Why, Thee, of course. Ain't he one of us?"

Babbitt wondered if Jakey had, through the day, felt as he had felt in reference to the undesirableness, in some respects, of having Theodore become one of their little circle. He was sure that up to that time it had been composed of congenial spirits; but how would it be if he should be admitted, and become a confidant with the rest? But he thought he would let Jakey have his way this time, and see what would come of it; so, without appearing surprised at all, he said:

"It does n't look exactly right, Jakey; but I am afraid if we go in to call him, some of the other boys would wake up and follow us out; then what would we do?"

"You trust me for that," said Jakey; "I can get him."

"Very well; go on, then."

Jakey needed no second invitation to do what was in his heart to do; so, with light step, he crept into the barracks, and, without any difficulty, found the bunk where Theodore lay asleep, as he supposed. A gentle push of his feet, as they stretched out over the edge of the bunk, a gentle shake, and a low call quickly

aroused Theodore; for he was not asleep, as Jakey supposed he would be.

In obedience to Jakey's softly-spoken "Come," he crept out of his bunk; and, when once upon the floor, hastily dressed himself and followed Jakey, whose form he could dimly see by the starlight that came through the open door. He did n't know what was in store for him, nor whither Jakey would lead him; nor did he care. His life had been such as had made little difference to him who led him or where he went. It had been entirely aimless. And yet there had been awakened in his breast new emotions by the kindness shown him by Babbitt and Jakey, and especially was he touched by their proposal to take him into their little secret circle.

Outside of the barracks, and in the light of the fire which glowed in the pit, he quickly discovered what was wanted of him, as he saw Babbitt standing near the boiling kettles, apparently waiting for him. As soon as they were beyond the hearing of the comrades in their bunks, Jakey said, by way of introduction, and because he had nothing better to say:

"We thought maybe you would like to be with *us* out here awhile to-night."

Theodore quickly replied: "Indeed I would. It seems to me I would not care to be with any

others but you and Babbitt,—I suppose I must say ‘corporal’ now.”

“Not by any means,” said Babbitt, as they drew near to him. “I should be sorry if you should speak of me in that way.”

“But what are you doing here anyway?” asked Theodore, in surprise.

Then the boys explained to him how it happened that they were there as watchers beside the fire; and Jakey further explained, as he had already done:

“We just thought that may be you would like to sit with us awhile. You need not stay until we go in unless you want to; but we can talk over matters out here better than we can anywhere else.”

Theodore said: “I was wondering where you had gone, and wished awfully you had asked me to go when Jakey called me;” and, while speaking, manifested an emotion that was surprising to the boys; for they did not know that his heart was really affected by their kindnesses. Indeed, they had expected him to be somewhat cold and unapproachable, and Babbitt had pictured to himself a very difficult task in getting his confidence. They did not at once speak to him upon the matter which was nearest to their hearts, but talked of everything else, questioning Theodore as to what he knew or

guessed as to his past life; and repaid him by detailing, as far as they found it interesting, the incidents of their former years, and spoke of the pleasures of their homes, and of their school-day associations, and of the providential up-building of their secret society. This opened the way for Babbitt to say:

"We believe in a Providence, you see, Theodore, and it is hard for us to understand why you do not."

"My life," he said, "has not been as yours. If there has been any Providence, as you call it, in my life, I do not see it. Why should I have a father, and never know him? Why should I have a mother, and never see her face or hear her voice? May-be I have brothers and sisters somewhere, but who knows?"

Babbitt could not resist the impulse to say: "God knows."

Theodore smiled contemptuously. "Perhaps he does," he said; "but if he does, who would care for a God like that?"

"You would not speak so," said Babbitt, "if you knew as we know."

"Do I not know what you know? and yet I feel just so," said Theodore.

Babbitt was undecided how to reply to this. He felt that Theodore had, from his stand-point, good grounds for feeling as he said he felt; and

he wondered whether, had he been placed in Theodore's place, he would not have had similar feelings. Quickly the resentment that he had felt earlier in the day toward this new-found friend, because of his avowed unbelief in God and his providence, melted away, and in its place he felt the glow of sincere pity. Finally, he said:

"You do not blame God for what has happened to you, do you?"

"No," Theodore said, "I do not blame him. Why should I blame something or some person that does not exist?"

"What!" said Babbitt, in surprise. "Do you doubt that there is a God?"

"I do. Why should n't I?"

Babbitt knew he was on dangerous ground. He did not wish to err here, and arouse in the mind of Theodore any new fears or doubts, and yet he felt there must be some way by which he could help his friend to the faith he himself felt; so, without knowing whither the step would lead, he said:

"Suppose, Theodore, Jakey and I believe as you believe; suppose, instead of your being the one of the three that does not believe in God, and in the Bible, and in Providence, as we, that we let go our belief, and say, as you do, 'We do not know; we do not believe.'"

Theodore quickly replied: "O, do not do that! do not do that!"

"Well, why should we not?" said Babbitt. "If you were right, would n't you want us to be with you in the right? And if you are happy in your unbelief, would you not want us to be with you and be as happy as you are? Remember, we are one now; we have agreed to be one. You can not come with us, so we will go with you."

"Do not do that," said Theodore, earnestly; "do not do that."

"Well, why?" persisted Babbitt. "We will, won't we, Jakey?"

Jakey did not know what the outcome would be; but he trusted Babbitt as his leader, and was willing to follow whither he should go; so, unhesitatingly, he said:

"Certainly."

There remained only one thing for Theodore to say, and that he was manly enough to declare at once:

"I am not happy. I wish I could think as you do. It surely would be better for me; I would be happier. I do n't want you to come with me; I would rather go with you. It is dark and gloomy where I am."

Babbitt's heart gave one great bound as these words came from Theodore's lips. They

were unexpected, and the end he sought seemed nearer than he dared to believe. He had hoped only that *some* time or other Theodore might be brought to see that faith was better than no faith; that the God of the Bible was better than no God; and that somehow, when he should see this better way, he might lead him as far as he himself had gone. Here Theodore was declaring openly that he was not in a safe way. Another thing that surprised Babbitt was the increase of his own faith, as he found another willing to become a believer with him if he could but find the path in which to walk to that end. He said, almost exultantly, after a moment's thought:

"Well, Theodore, you do not want us to go to you. You say you can not come to us. Let us, at least, find some common ground on which we can stand. Or, perhaps," he said, after thinking again a moment, "we had better let this matter drop. I am sure you do not care to dispute our position with us, and we will not dispute yours now; but after awhile, when we are better acquainted with each other, we can talk of this matter again."

Theodore readily consented to this proposition, and said, feelingly:

"I can not understand why you two should care for me, or should have invited me to be-

come a friend of yours—you might say a brother. I do not understand why you should do this; and yet I must say that I have not known in all my life any happiness until to-day, when I find that there is some one that cares for me, and sympathizes with me, and wants to help me."

Stalwart young man as he was, almost touching the borders of manhood, Babbitt and Jakey could see, by the gleams of the flickering fire-light, that Theodore was convulsed with strong emotion; that hope and love struggled for the mastery over fear.

It was a new experience to Babbitt, this thing of being a soul-helper; for that is what he thought himself at that time. He was surprised, also, at the frankness with which Theodore told of his unbelief, and by the depth of the feeling he had manifested. He was attracted, moreover, by the fine form and features of his new friend, and could not put aside an impression that here was a jewel, encased in the ruggedness of Theodore's manner—such a jewel as would repay effort to bring to light.

He said to himself that one with such a mind, which had attained so great a development under such unfavorable surroundings, must be of a superior order. But whether The-

odore was of superior parentage or not; whether his mind was of the kind that could grasp great truths or not; whether he was worthy as men are wont to estimate worth, he was confident of one thing, and that was that Theodore had a soul for whom the Master had died, and, for this reason, was worth any or all the help he might give,—worth any or all the help the combined strength their little society might give.

But he was unskilled in the work which had thus suddenly come to his hand, and he felt a strange timidity about further discussing this matter with Theodore and Jakey, and concluded to let the matter drop, not to be taken up again only as it might come up, from time to time, incidentally in their after associations.

Again the boys fell to talking, as they watched beside the fire, of other years and other days; and, by persistent questioning, Babbitt was enabled to get, as he thought, glimpses of the life from which Theodore had come, and was sure that there was connected with him a mystery that could be solved; and that, at any rate, he and Jakey were fortunate in having become associated so intimately with so genial a spirit as Theodore.

The time slipped by unheeded, and they

were really surprised when the old cook emerged from the barracks and came to them, insisting that they should now go to their needed rest, as the cock had already crowed thrice for morning.



Chapter VII.

A GREAT DAY.

IT is well, perhaps, that some mention should be made of the dinner the cook had promised for the next day. To describe the courses would not be difficult, nor require much time, as they consisted, in the first place, of beans—baked, or as nearly baked as was possible with their facilities. The cook declared that they were, in every particular, equal to any baked beans that any Bostonian had ever eaten.

The second course of the dinner that day was somewhat like the first, and consisted of beans. The men did not object to this; for, being served once with this article of diet, upon which the cook had expended his best ability and greatest skill, they were not averse to a second course like it.

It was not until they had reached the third that they demurred mildly, and suggested that there might be, as far as they were concerned, *some* variations; for, contrary to their usual

custom, those that desired the third course, were served as they had been the other two—with beans. There were the usual accompaniments—coffee without milk, a plentiful supply of sugar, and hard crackers—or hard-tack, as it was known—and those who desired to do so were permitted to fish from the kettle, in which the beans had been simmering through the night and half of that day, such pieces of salt-pork as had not been dissolved by the long and intense heat that was necessary to bake the beans.

The entire company were hearty and unanimous in their declaration that the cook had succeeded admirably, and had given them such a dinner as they never dared hope for under the circumstances. He was pleased at this appreciation upon the part of the men, and rather astonished them as he said, by way of acknowledgment of his pleasure,

“We must do this again, some time!”

Perhaps more attention would have been given to the meal, had there not been afloat in the air that morning rumors of some unusual event to occur some time during the day; but, like most happenings in army life, there was but little else than rumor. Whatever the officers might have known of the expected turn in affairs they were as silent as though they knew nothing.

There had come to the men, however, from some source, a report that the camp would be visited by the adjutant-general of the State, and that his visit meant an inspection; and that, following the inspection, there would occur the organization of regiments.

Coupled with these rumors was the statement, made by those who pretended to be well informed, that the inspection would result in the rejection of a great many of the men, either on account of extreme age or extreme youth, decrepitude of years, or the tenderness of childhood.

Naturally enough, this caused considerable uneasiness; for there were none present who cared to be rejected, however much any of them might have repented of their choosing to be soldiers. If they had to go home, they preferred that it should be a voluntary action on their part, rather than an enforced retirement because of rejection by the Government.

Among those most interested in the matter was Babbitt. As has been said, he doubted from the first his ability to pass a rigid examination, and was well aware that he was under age, if not under size. And, strange enough, the one next to him, who was most concerned, was the old cook, who had passed far beyond effective age, and was anything but an erect figure

or possessed of any of the qualifications usually deemed requisite for an able soldier.

The afternoon was nearly gone, and, as there had been no call to drill, the men were confirmed in their notion that something unusual was about to happen. They were still further confirmed in this idea by the appearance in camp (with some of the officers of the various companies) of certain men of dignified bearing.

That readily suggested to the boys that there were good grounds for the rumor that the State officials were present, and would make the expected examination.

About three o'clock the camp was aroused by the presence of a young man in the uniform of a United States officer, who summoned to him several of the captains of the companies. Soon afterward, however, he drove back to town, and the soldiers were left to guess what his mission had been.

A little while after, the same officer returned, and this time was accompanied by two or three persons in civilian's dress, who seemed to be his equal, if not superior in authority, judging from their maneuvers.

Soon after they appeared, there came from all of the barracks the cry:

"FALL IN! FALL IN!"

And immediately there followed the busy hum

of men taking their places in the companies—the usual noise preparatory to the formation of squads and companies. And then came the movements of the various commands out upon the drill-ground; every company headed toward the place where the officer and the accompanying State officials were seated in an open carriage.

One by one the companies were filed into line close beside the carriage, until all of the twenty had been massed in a very small area of ground.

Then followed low-toned conversation among the officials in the carriage, and some orders issued to the officers who stood nearest; and, after this, a movement on the part of each company to take position in a less crowded manner; so that one standing by and looking on might have seen twenty companies of infantry ranged, one behind the other, with a small interval of space between them.

The men were kept in this position until the officer had passed rapidly down in front of the first company; then retraced his steps in front of the other company to go down behind the second, in front of the third, and so on, until he had rapidly passed before the twenty. He then returned to the carriage, and the men in the companies were ordered to be massed again in close order about the officials.

What all this could mean none of them could guess; yet Babbitt was greatly relieved, as was the old cook, when some one suggested that this was the inspection which had been so much dreaded, and that they were now safe from any rejection on the part of the Government, and would surely be mustered into the United States service.

When they had been re-formed about the carriage, one of the officials, who had been introduced as the adjutant-general of the State, arose and made a very eloquent and patriotic speech, which, under any other circumstances, would have been most heartily cheered; but the men had been so drilled in preserving silence that they made no demonstration.

Soon afterward the carriage drove away, and the important event of the day seemed to have dwindled into rather an insignificant mass-meeting of the soldiers, with a very careless inspection. This was what they all thought as they returned to the barracks, having been the whole day excused from the drill—as they all thought—for the very purpose of this inspection.

Scarcely, however, had they clambered into their bunks to lounge away the rest of the day, before the call was again made for them to fall in; and they were quickly formed and marched out upon the parade-ground.

This time the company officers were called together for consultation; and, after an hour's waiting, in which the men had nothing to do but to stand in their places and await orders, and in which the State officials and one or two strangers and the company officers were in consultation, ten of the companies, as designated in some way which none of the privates could understand, withdrew and returned to their barracks, leaving the other ten for future maneuvers.

It soon became known among those in ranks and those in their barracks, that this division of the men had been made for the purpose of regimental formation, and that, while the men were not consulted in any way as to what regiment they should belong to, or what companies should be associated with them in regiment, the captains of companies, the State officials, and the men who had been selected as regiment officers, were in full agreement as to what companies should constitute the regiments.

Though seemingly unimportant and insignificant were all these maneuvers, there was something about it that, to Babbitt's mind, was more like soldier-life, more like preparation for real war, than anything he had yet experienced. He began to see that there were others besides his own officers who were concerned about the character and condition of the men, and he was

very soon undeceived as to the review of that day being the critical inspection of the men, which should be made before they could be mustered into the service; for, though his company was not one of those which had been retained on the ground to become a part of the First Regiment, he learned from members of those companies that orders had been issued for preparation for the expected rigid inspection, which would occur after a few days.

His fears, which had been allayed by the first hasty review, came again with renewed force. He was very anxious about the outcome of inspection; for he desired, having entered upon the service, to complete the term for which he had enlisted; and the more so because he had begun to feel strong ties of attachment for Jakey, Theodore, and for several others with whom he had been intimately associated since coming into camp. One of the rumors which followed this selection of the companies for regiment formation was, that immediately there would be issued to the men the regular uniforms, and that this would be followed by the distribution of the arms—the guns, the ammunition-boxes, and all the accouterments of the well-equipped soldier.

There was, naturally, great curiosity among them to know just how each would appear in

the uniform of the Government, and just what kind of uniform would be given them; also, what kind of arms would be distributed.

This, too, suggested that their stay in the camp would be of short duration; probably that, when uniformed and armed, there could be but one use for them, and that would be at the front, or, at least, somewhere in the enemy's country. Then came surmises as to where and as to whether their short term of service would result in actual conflict with the enemy, and what the result would be.

These were some of the things of which Babbitt and Jakey and Theodore were talking just as the sun went down, when he was surprised by the appearance in camp of three persons he had not expected to see until he returned home. They were his father, Jakey's mother, and Miss Laura Lawrence.

So surprised was he when brought face to face with them, that he could not find words to express his feelings, on account of which he was heartily laughed at by Miss Laura, who said with good-natured raillery:

"I never knew you to lack for words before."

"You never saw me under such circumstances before," said Babbitt. "Who was expecting *you*, or any of you, for that matter? What brought you?"

"I do not know who shall be credited with this unexpected visit," said Mr. Carl, "unless it is Mrs. Jacobus here."

There was no denial of this statement on the part of Mrs. Jacobus. Indeed, she had not yet found words to express her sentiments; nor was it expected that she would.

Very soon, having been called by Babbitt, Jakey made his appearance in front of the barracks, where the three were awaiting him. He was as much surprised as Babbitt had been, and seemingly as much delighted. He greeted his mother as one of his training might have been expected to greet her—with a simple "How d'ye"—but with as much meaning in his eyes and in his manner as was shown by Babbitt, or could have been shown by any one. His mother's salutation was equally brief; for she simply said, "Jakey!" and awkwardly grasped him by the hand and gave it a very awkward shake.

Mr. Carl noticed the evident embarrassment of these two, and, without seeming to do so, engaged Babbitt and Miss Laura in conversation, that Jakey and his mother might, unobserved, withdraw to talk over their own matters as they should see fit.

Then it was that Mr. Carl said, by way of explanation: "Nothing would do for Mrs. Ja-

cobus but that she should come and see Jakey. She has had an impression, she says, that unless she should see him now, she might never see him again."

"No wonder," said Miss Laura. "Jakey's father, you know, lies in some unknown grave in the South, and, while she was perfectly willing that Jakey should follow his father's footsteps, she is impressed that it will be not only to enlist, as he did, but perhaps to remain, as he does, in the South."

"Does she talk about that yet?" said Babbitt, in surprise.

"Not much; but that is evidently the way she feels from what little she does say," said Miss Laura.

"But why didn't mother come?" said Babbitt. "All the rest of you here, how nice it would have been if she could have been here too! Of course, you are going to stay here several days, are you not?"

"Impossible!" said Mr. Carl. "We must go back to-night. It is only a little way, you know, from home, so we concluded it would be best for us to come over and see how you were getting along."

"But why didn't mother come?" asked Babbitt.

Mr. Carl smiled, and said: "I may just as

well tell you, though I had intended to surprise you more than you will be surprised now; for your mother is here, though she did not ride out to the camp; she is at the hotel."

"Did n't she come down to the camp?" he said, disappointedly.

Babbitt could not understand for the moment why this should be. His fears got the better of his judgment, and, with the keenest disappointment depicted in every feature, and with a tone that was really tremulous, he said:

"And does n't she care to see me?"

Then Miss Laura spoke quickly and somewhat reprovingly, although she could appreciate Babbitt's feelings under the circumstances, and said:

"O, Babbitt, you know that can not be! Of course she wants to see you. She wants to see you so much that she dare not come to see you here, where so many are around you. Can't you get a leave of absence?"

"Of course," said Babbitt; "I should think so. I have not asked for any since I have been here. I have not left camp since we came in the first day."

"Then let us arrange," Mr. Carl said, "to have you come down to the hotel and take supper with us. See, it is nearly supper-time now, or more than supper-time. But they will

wait for us; I spoke to them about it before I came up."

"But Jakey," said Babbitt; "what about him?"

"Bring him with you, of course," said Mr. Carl.

Then Babbitt hesitated. There was one other that he wanted to take; but dared he suggest that matter to his father? And would the other accept? After a moment's hesitation, he said:

"But we have another friend; can we bring him too?"

Mr. Carl laughed, and said: "Yes, certainly; but be sure, now, Babbitt, that you do not bring the whole company!"

"Of course not, father; but this other friend—I do so want you to see him."

"By the way," said Miss Laura, "how about that society? Are you going to take me in?"

"Certainly," Babbitt replied; "you are in now. We have already taken you in. That is why I want this other friend to meet us at the hotel. He is to belong too, and there is something very curious about him."

By this time Jakey and his mother had returned to the group, both happy in the privilege that had been given them of seeing each other; and they were at once informed of the

arrangements to meet at the hotel for supper, and for a visit until the late train came that should take the visitors back to their homes.

As Babbitt had anticipated, his parents and Miss Laura were quite as much interested in the history of Theodore's life as he and Jakey had been; and, after supper, Mr. Carl took the matter in hand, and informed himself as thoroughly as possible upon the facts of Theodore's life—particularly as to when he had gone to live with Mr. Jenkins, as nearly as he could remember, and what Mr. Jenkins had said to him about his parentage, and, in short, all the details which could be gathered in the short time allotted them in the interview.

As they were about to separate, Mr. Carl and his company returning to the depot on their way home, and Babbitt and the boys to the camp, Mr. Carl said, by way of encouragement to Theodore, that he should lose no time in making a trip to the home of Farmer Jenkins, and obtain, if possible, some clew that he might work upon prior to the return of the boys from the war.

All this interest in his welfare not only deeply affected Theodore, but aroused in his mind questioning as to why these people, so lately entirely strangers to him, not connected with him in any way by ties of nature, should

give so much time and labor to the solving of the question that was of interest to him personally, and not to them at all, except indirectly. He expressed this thought to Mr. Carl, as he had to Babbitt, and said again:

"I can not understand."

Mr. Carl good-naturedly replied:

"It is not necessary, Theodore, that you should understand why we do this; and yet, unless I should busy myself, in some degree at least, in assisting you in this matter of so much importance to you, I would be ashamed ever afterward to call myself a Christian. You know what a Christian is, do you not, Theodore?"

Up to this time there had been nothing said to Mr. Carl or the others of his party with reference to Theodore's attitude upon the subject of the religion of the Bible and of God; so that the question asked him was not put designedly, but came as a matter of course from the conversation.

Theodore was momentarily embarrassed. He certainly did know in one sense what a Christian is; so that, while he hadn't any personal experiences to rely upon, he was obliged to say:

"Certainly, Mr. Carl; but I do not know what that has to do with this matter."

"The central thought in every Christian's life," Mr. Carl said, "is labor for others, sacri-

ficing self for the benefit of others. You know the law that governs the Christian, or rather, that guides him in his conduct (for he does not need to be governed), is love to God and to men, love for every one, and especially those that are in need of assistance. Where a person has had much done for him, he naturally feels an impulse to show his appreciation of this work by doing much for some one else. As Christ came into the world to seek the lost, so his followers will always be actuated by a similar desire; that is, to restore the lost to their right place."

It was foreign to Mr. Carl's intention to theorize or sermonize at that time, as he had no idea but that his sentiments would find a ready response in the mind of Theodore.

Babbitt wisely remained silent, taking no part in this conversation, fearing that he might overdo the matter, and, instead of attracting, would repel his friend. He was glad, however, that the occasion had come for his father to speak as he had spoken; and he could see that Theodore was not at all offended, but rather that there was an interest manifest in his manner. Theodore finally said:

"I understand all that, Mr. Carl; but it is all new to me. Where I have lived people have thought most of themselves, and nothing of others."

Mr. Carl made no reply to this statement; but, instead, remarked:

"I am glad that I have had the pleasure of making your acquaintance, Theodore; I am glad that I am in a position to do you some service. I feel encouraged to believe that our efforts will not be fruitless."

The thought of a visit to Farmer Jenkins by his father awakened new hope in the mind of Babbitt, and led him to believe that the tact and energy and perseverance of his father would certainly bring good results.

On the way back to camp, many were the bright anticipations indulged in by the boys of what their mutual endeavors in Theodore's behalf would bring forth.

Mr. Carl and his party, as they swiftly sped homeward on the train, were also discussing this subject, and were as sanguine as Babbitt that time would surely bring the desired information. Mr. Carl found an ardent sympathizer in the person of Miss Laura Lawrence; and she at once insisted that when the trip should be made to Farmer Jenkins's home she might be permitted to be one of the party.

The visit to the camp, which had been undertaken aimlessly, except the mere fact of visiting the boys, seemed to have been directed for a

better purpose than any of them had in mind when it was undertaken.

No wonder that the three boys, after crawling into their bunks and covering up with their blankets, spent much time in wakefulness, for it had indeed been a great day to them.



Chapter VIII.

THE SCOUTING PARTY.

AS soon as he could find the whereabouts of Farmer Jenkins, Mr. Carl determined to fulfill his promise, and visit that gentleman for the purpose of learning what he could of Theodore. Miss Laura insisted on accompanying him, and he the more readily consented to let her be one of the party, as Mrs. Jacobus had also requested to be present at the investigation.

The drive was a long one, as Mr. Jenkins lived some twenty-five miles from Mr. Carl's home; but the distance did not deter the ladies from becoming members of the party; indeed, they anticipated much pleasure from the trip, even though it should be barren of results as to Theodore's ancestry.

At that time in the year, the latter part of May, the Illinois prairie-roads are in their best condition, and for many miles stretch over a comparative level, and are as hard and smooth as a well-kept pike. For this reason, a drive of

twenty-five miles could be easily made. Their route, for a considerable distance, followed the section-lines, and passed along the sides of fine farms, occasionally touching the groves which could be found at intervals across the prairie, and especially along the water-courses.

The start was made early in the day, just at sunrise, all of the party in excellent spirits, and determined to find as much enjoyment as possible in their excursion. They were seated in an open spring-wagon, a light, handsome vehicle, with comfortable upholstered seats, drawn by a span of spirited and well-matched horses. As they left Mr. Carl's gate, his wife waved a farewell, and exclaimed:

"Peace go with you, and may you return with joyful tidings!"

Before they reached the end of their journey the character of the landscape had greatly changed. Instead of broad prairie-farms, handsome homes, well-kept surroundings, fruit-orchards, and flower-gardens, they plunged into a dense woods, and followed a road which wound tortuously, oftentimes descending abruptly into the bottom of a ravine, and frequently following the channel of the dried-up stream, to climb again up a steep bank, and wind around the foot of some thickly-wooded mound.

Occasionally they would pass a clearing of a

few acres, a log cabin and log stables being the only evidence of human habitation, excepting an occasional barking of the dogs, and now and then a frowsy head thrust out of the door to see who the passers-by might be.

By these scenes they knew that they were not far from the end of their journey; for they had been told that Farmer Jenkins lived in the Flat Woods, a term used to describe the heavily-timbered district that bordered one of the insignificant rivers of that portion of the country.

Mr. Carl consulted the directions he had provided himself with, and felt certain that the next clearing they approached would be the farm of the man they sought. After a short drive along an unusually stumpy and rutty road, they emerged into a clearing, and saw a house set well back, a man with his team near the road, but no other person in sight. A fence, made partly of rails, the ends of which in many places rested upon the ground, while the other ends were piled upon a convenient stump, against which was dragged the refuse brush or top-pings from recent clearings, stood between.

The farmer was busy repairing this nondescript fence, if the work of putting on a few extra rails here and there, or of piling the brush a little more compactly, could be called repairing.

At the sound of the approaching vehicle he looked up, but quickly resumed his work, apparently wholly indifferent as to who was coming, where they were going, or what business brought them to the vicinity of his farm. Mr. Carl's quick eye took in the situation at a glance. Miss Laura was greatly surprised, and said in an undertone to Mrs. Jacobus:

"How could any one consent to live here in this desolate region, when just a few miles away they might have a fine prairie-farm without stumps, or rocks, or any of the hard work that a place of this kind requires."

Mrs. Jacobus made no reply, for they had now come alongside the busy farmer. Mr. Carl was the first to speak, as he stopped the team:

"Good morning, sir."

The farmer straightened himself up, looked at the callers a moment, expectorated a quantity of tobacco-juice, said, "Morning," and resumed his work, as though he did not care to enter into conversation.

He was of that class of men not easily described; yet it would be well to have in mind a picture of him as he appeared to Mr. Carl and his companions. He was tall, muscular, yet stooping with the weight of years. His hat, pushed well back on his head, showed that he had a high and receding forehead, and was

partially bald. His eyes were small, gray, and piercing. His nose was large, long, and slightly inclined to be hooked. His face was smooth-shaven, the high cheek-bones being very prominent, and seemingly made to correspond in the sharpness of their outline with the pointedness of his chin. From ear to ear under his chin, hiding the throat, hung a heavy, long, gray beard.

His dress was such as might have been expected from one with his surroundings—a coarse, heavy shirt, of dark-check material; his pants of heavy brown jeans, the bottoms of which were partly caught up and partly fallen over the tops of high, rough shoes. He was constantly moving his jaws in the act of chewing the large quid of tobacco in his mouth. Near by stood his team, and that was the most attractive object in sight; for they were first-class in appearance, and were well-kept, evidently having no reason to complain of their master.

Mr. Carl quickly decided that he had a queer case to deal with, and, if he should get the desired information from him, it would probably be by strategy rather than by direct assault. Miss Laura's heart failed her as soon as she discovered what kind of a man was before them.

What Mrs. Jacobus thought did not appear

at first. Indeed, one would scarcely know that she was thinking at all. As usual, she wore the old-fashioned sun-bonnet; there was gathered about her shoulders the light shawl which at all times was a portion of her costume, whether the weather was warm or cold.

"Can you tell me, sir," said Mr. Carl, finally, "where I could find Farmer Jenkins?"

The man addressed lifted himself again, eyed his questioner curiously, and said laconically:

"I might," and resumed his work.

Mr. Carl waited for him to give the asked-for information; but, as he remained silent, though busily piling the brush against the stumps and rails, he was obliged to say:

"May I trouble you to tell me where I could find him?"

"No trouble to find him," said the other.

"We have come a long distance to call on him, and if you can tell us where he is, we shall be under many obligations."

"You need go no further. What do you want of him?"

"I would rather tell him himself what we want of him," said Mr. Carl, determined not to understand these remarks, as it was evidently expected he would.

"I am Jenkins."

"I am glad to see you, Mr. Jenkins," said Mr. Carl. "I see you are very busy, and probably would not like to be detained by us any longer than necessary, so I will tell you at once what we came for."

"Well, out with it!" said Jenkins.

"Perhaps we are occupying your time," Mr. Carl said, desiring in some way to ingratiate himself in Jenkins's favor.

"Not taking my time," he replied, as he continued his work, moving away from them so that it was necessary for them to drive still further along the road to keep within speaking distance.

"If you will give me just a half an hour of your time, and perhaps less," said Mr. Carl, "I shall feel greatly repaid for driving twenty-five miles to see you."

"Why should I give you any of my time?" said Jenkins.

"For the sake of another," said Mr. Carl, "who seems to be in need."

"What can I do?" said Jenkins, impatiently.

"Do you know a young man named Theodore Tompkins?" said Mr. Carl, scarcely knowing whether that would be a proper question at that stage of the interview or not.

"No," said Jenkins.

Mr. Carl was nonplused. He didn't expect

any such response. He could not tell whether Jenkins was telling him the truth or simply lying to him to evade further questioning; so he said, as though apologizing for his interruption:

"We were told that he is a friend of yours; that you probably could tell us something of his parentage."

Jenkins lifted himself up once more, took off his hat, and vigorously scratched the back part of his head, chewed his tobacco faster, expelled the saliva, and vengefully hissed:

"I know a young scapegrace they *call* Theodore Tompkins, but he ain't."

Mr. Carl brightened quickly, and said, with a smile:

"Doubtless he is the one we are asking after. Can you give us any information as to his parentage?"

"I could if I would, but I won't!" said Jenkins.

Mr. Carl was unexpectedly nettled at this harsh reply, and he said more angrily than he had thought it was possible for him to speak:

"You say you won't, but I say you will! There is still some law in this land."

Jenkins was not moved by this threat, and calmly pursued his work, grunting out as he lifted a huge piece of tree-top into place:

"I have heard that before. I guess there is

no law to make a man talk if he does n't want to, and I do n't."

Mr. Carl felt that he was more than matched; and yet did n't desire to give up the interview without something from Jenkins that would give a clew to the past of Theodore's life, so he said:

"Mr. Jenkins, I am willing to say this: If you have any claim on Theodore or on his time, or if the information you hold as to his ancestry is of any value to you, I will gladly reward you for the information or pay you any claim you may have against Theodore's time."

"Perhaps you would, perhaps you would n't," said Jenkins. "As to his ancestry, the less you know about that, the better for you. As to the rascal himself, the less you have to do with him the happier you will be. Put that in your pipe and smoke it!"

Mr. Carl could not resist the temptation to say:

"You do not seem to have thought so; you kept him pretty close to you for about seventeen years."

"How do you know?" said Jenkins, in surprise. "Who are you, anyway?"

"I am Theodore's friend," said Mr. Carl. "I am not to be turned aside from the work I have in hand by what you say of him or his parent-

age. He tells me that he does not know who his parents are. It is a mystery that he would like to solve; it is a mystery that I would like to see cleared up for his sake—for his sake only. I have no interest in the matter at all."

Jenkins lifted himself once again, took off his hat, and, gazing angrily at Mr. Carl, he gesticulated wildly with his other hand, saying:

"I will tell you nothing! I will tell you nothing! And more than that, it will be better for you to leave this neighborhood as soon as possible. Mind what I tell you: don't stay here till night-fall!"

Mr. Carl was completely disconcerted by this outburst, and was unprepared for further maneuvers, though not at all frightened by Jenkins's hints of violence or the predicted danger to him and his companions should the night come and find them still in that neighborhood.

He was meditating what his further course should be, when he and Miss Laura were much surprised, and Farmer Jenkins greatly startled, by Mrs. Jacobus rising in her seat, pushing back her sun-bonnet until it fell upon her shoulders behind, stretching out her arm toward Jenkins, shaking her long, bony finger at him, and saying, in almost a scream:

"Lewis Jenkins, I know you! I know where you came from! I know who Theodore is, and

you will have to kill *me* to save yourself from the prison! I am—I—O!"

She gasped for breath, clasped her hands over her heart, and sat down, completely overcome by emotion, and would have fallen out of the wagon had she not been caught by Laura, who was not so badly frightened that she could not care for Mrs. Jacobus.

Jenkins suddenly lost his bravado, and stood as one transfixed, unable to utter a word, but pale and trembling, thoroughly aroused and frightened by this unexpected announcement.



Chapter IX.

THE RETREAT.

“WILL you help me a moment?” said Laura, when she saw that Mrs. Jacobus was apparently helpless, and was a burden that she could not easily manage by herself.

Mr. Carl dropped the lines across the dashboard, and turned around to assist Laura in caring for Mrs. Jacobus. While he was doing this, Jenkins improved the opportunity to spring into his wagon and drive rapidly toward his house. He need not have been in such haste, for Mr. Carl and Laura were intent upon caring for Mrs. Jacobus, and just at that time wholly indifferent as to Jenkins’s movements.

“I am afraid she is dying,” said Laura as Mrs. Jacobus fell still more heavily into her arms.

“O, I hope not!” Mr. Carl answered, at the same time endeavoring to lift Laura’s burden

into his own arms. He, however, laid her down again tenderly in the arms of Laura, saying:

"Just hold her one moment, please, until I have tied the horses to this sapling, lest a worse thing should happen to us if they should become frightened."

When the horses had been made secure, he returned to the work of providing a comfortable resting-place for Mrs. Jacobus, who by this time seemed to be quite unconscious. He and Laura managed to remove the rear seat of the spring-wagon, so that their patient might be laid at full length upon the bottom of the wagon, having taken the precaution to use the cushion of the seat for a pillow for her. Having thus gently and kindly cared for Mrs. Jacobus, they looked at each other in silent bewilderment.

"What shall we do?" asked Laura, anxiously.

"I was just thinking," said Mr. Carl, continuing to meditate.

"If we were in a decent neighborhood," said Laura, "I would know what to do."

"How is that?"

"Why, of course, we would take her to some convenient house, and ask that she be kept until she was better, or until we could remove her to her own home."

"Quite true," said Mr. Carl; "but where is the convenient house in this locality? It would not do to take her there," he said, nodding toward Jenkins's house.

"Certainly not," Laura said; "that would not do even if he should be willing to take her in. I would not trust any friend of mine in his keeping."

After a few moments of further meditation, Mr. Carl said:

"The best thing for us to do is to retrace our way home."

"I don't mind it for myself," said Laura, as she thought of the long drive to be made in that event; "but how could Mrs. Jacobus stand it?"

"Very well, I believe," said Mr. Carl. "You remember the roads, after we get out of the timber, are very smooth. Perhaps she will revive after awhile. At any rate, the best thing we can do is to get home, where we shall have for her proper care and nursing."

"Can we not make her more comfortable than she appears to be now?" asked Laura, as she looked upon the unconscious form of Mrs. Jacobus, her white, thin face upturned to the sun.

"Certainly. You just remain here, and I will cross the field to yonder straw-stack, and I

will bring an armful of it, and we can make her quite a comfortable bed with the aid of these horse-blankets here."

"But isn't that straw Jenkins's?" said Laura, in a half-frightened tone. "Will he let you take it?"

"Let me?" Mr. Carl said, in a contemptuous tone. "I shall not ask him. I shall go and get it—what I need of it. It is fortunate that he has that much left over from his last year's crops." Without further delay, he hastened to the straw-stack and procured an armful—quite enough to make a very comfortable bed for their patient.

They spread the straw upon the bottom of the wagon-bed, and over this stretched the two blankets which Mr. Carl always carried with him when taking a long drive, for the purpose of protecting his horses from taking cold when overheated. The cushion was used as a seat for Miss Laura, placed flat upon the bed, while she insisted upon making her lap a pillow for Mrs. Jacobus's head. When the ladies were arranged in this way, the other seat was put in the wagon in front of Mr. Carl, and they started on their homeward journey.

Their road for an hour ran through the heavily-timbered district, and was a tedious and tortuous route. Many times during the hour

Mr. Carl looked back to see how the sick one and Miss Laura were faring, and to encourage the young lady, as well as he could, to brace herself against any possible fatigue, saying that as soon as they got out of the timber they would make good time; for he would not spare his horses, but hasten home at good speed.

When high noon arrived, they found themselves upon the point of emerging from the timbered district into the open prairie.

"If we are to make our drive home to-night," said Mr. Carl, "it is best for us to stop here and let the horses rest. We ourselves will rest and eat our dinner under the shade of these trees."

Turning aside from the highway into a secluded nook, they stopped. Mrs. Jacobus was made as comfortable as possible upon the cushion pillow, while Miss Laura gave her attention to the spreading of the lunch, or dinner, which they had brought with them, Mr. Carl attending to the horses.

"I don't feel like eating," said Mr. Carl, when they were seated, near by the wagon, on convenient stumps, the dinner between them on a white cloth spread on the grass; "but I know that you and I both must take care of ourselves if we would be in a condition to take care of Mrs. Jacobus. Perhaps you would rather have

gone straight home," he said to Miss Laura, "instead of stopping by the wayside."

"No, indeed. I think that you have acted wisely. I am not very much accustomed to such expeditions as this," she said, smiling; "but I believe that I shall have strength to get through with it."

"We surely shall be strengthened," he said; "for you know the promise is, that 'as our days, so shall our strength be.'"

"I have often thought of that promise," said Miss Laura, "but I do not know that it ever came to me with as much force as it does now."

"What grieves me most now," said Mr. Carl, "is not that old Jenkins would not tell me what he knows, but that Mrs. Jacobus may not recover so as to tell us what she knows."

"Were you ever more surprised in your life?" asked Laura. "Who would have thought that she knew Mr. Jenkins?"

"I am not sure yet," Mr. Carl said, "that she does know him. You know she is so very queer, and we have been talking about him in her presence ever since we were at the camp, off and on, and she may have, in some way, imagined that she knew him, and her saying what she did to him may have been another of her queer freaks."

"But you don't believe it is?" exclaimed Laura.

"No, I really don't believe it was a freak of hers, and yet I am only suggesting that that is a possibility."

"But if she really knows Jenkins, and really knows who Theodore is, why is it that she had never told us anything of her knowledge?"

"I can't explain that," said Mr. Carl; "but you will remember that, during all the time that we have been talking about this matter and planning this trip, she has said nothing one way or the other. The only thing that I can now see reasonable in her saying that she knows Jenkins, or had known him, and knew who Theodore is, is that she insisted upon coming with us to-day. She possibly might have thought that this Jenkins was not the one that she knew, or that this young man was not the person whose disappearance she was acquainted with, so waited until she had seen Jenkins before saying anything about it."

"I do hope it is that way," said Laura. "I do hope she will get well. What do you suppose is the matter with her now, Mr. Carl? Did she faint?"

"She certainly fainted," he said; "but I was noticing her a few minutes ago, and it seems to me that she has quite a fever. You

know for several weeks, perhaps months, she has been under a severe nervous strain. The loss of her husband, and then Jakey's going away, and all the other exciting events that have recently occurred, have told greatly on her feeble strength; so I think it is a case of nervous prostration, and I fear that it may be followed by severe fever, that may result fatally."

"O, I hope not!" said Laura, earnestly, and with ill-suppressed emotion.

"So do I; but we must look at the matter just as it is, and not count anything upon any aid that she may give us."

"But will you see Jenkins again?" said Laura.

"Certainly," said Mr. Carl, and then laughingly said: "But next time I call at his house, it will not be with—" he hesitated, not knowing whether to finish his sentence or not, lest he should unintentionally offend his friend.

"I know what you were about to say," said Laura, smiling; "and yet, after all, you can not deny that it was a good thing that this time you went there you were accompanied by women."

"Well, I had not thought of it in just that light," said Mr. Carl, good-naturedly. "Seeing you understand what I was about to say, I will now say it," he said. "The next time I go

there it will not be with women, but with officers of the law."

"But what can law do in this matter?" said she. "What power can make Jenkins tell what he knows if he does not want to tell it?"

Mr. Carl was silent a moment, and then said:

"My plans are not yet matured; but there certainly is some way of finding out what we want to know. You are yourself witness that he said he knows, but will not tell."

"Yes, I can testify to that; but still I doubt whether there is any power on earth that could make him give any information he has if he does not wish to do so. I believe that he would go to prison rather than to yield his point," continued Laura.

"Very well; we shall see," said Mr. Carl. "By the way, can you recollect what time Mrs. Jacobus came to our town? or was that before you could remember?"

"It was not before I could remember, surely," she said; "but it is difficult for me now to fix the time. I know she has lived there a great many years; but you know that, until recently, circumstances have not thrown me into her society, or brought me any way into contact with her only indirectly, and I can not remember."

"So it is with me," Mr. Carl said. "I know that Jakey and Babbitt have been good school friends, and they have visited each other back and forward; but really our families have not been intimate, and I never have known much, if anything, of Mrs. Jacobus's history previous to the war. Indeed, I have known more of her since her husband went into the army than at any time; and as to that, I have seen more of her during the last month than perhaps the past year previous, all because of Babbitt and Jakey being so intimately associated in the company."

"It is a great mystery to me," said Miss Laura, thoughtfully, after they had finished their lunch, and both sat musing over the events of the day. "The greatest mystery is that I should have had anything to do with it."

"I hope that you are not sorry," said Mr. Carl, "that you yielded to your impulse to ask to become a member of Babbitt's society."

"Indeed I am not sorry," she said. "I think that it is grand to be able to do something for somebody else without any thought of reward or pay. It seems to me that the most of my life has been spent in doing the things that I really wanted to do, and that promised to be of some benefit to me; and I can not say that I wanted to make this trip to-day for any other

purpose than simply to do something for some person for the love of Jesus."

"That is a good view to take of the matter; and yet, after all, if we consider His promise, and we certainly do, we shall have our reward even for that."

"As to that," said Miss Laura, "I have my pay now, in the satisfaction of knowing I have done my duty."

A short time afterward they were comfortably settled in the wagon, on their way home.

"I think, if all goes well," Mr. Carl said, "even if we have to go slow over a portion of the road that is rough, as I remember it now, that we can, perhaps, get home by sundown without hurrying the team at all."

"How far is it, do you think, from here?" Miss Laura asked, anxiously.

"Well, I should judge that we are about twenty miles from home at present."

"And that is how many hours drive with tired horses?" asked Miss Laura.

"Well, with a fresh team," Mr. Carl said, "I could make the twenty miles easily in four hours; but after they have traveled thirty miles already, I am afraid I will have to be easy on them; so we will see if we can make it in five and a half hours—perhaps six."

"That means after sundown," said Laura.

"Certainly; but it will be that much better. I am really glad that we shall not get home until after night-fall. We shall be able to get into town and to our homes without attracting much attention. So many rumors might be put into circulation, and some exaggerated reports might get to the boys. I would rather that no one inform them of this excursion to-day until I have written to them myself."

"True," said Miss Laura; "but it seems a long time—six hours. I am afraid I shall not be able to stand it," she said, doubtfully.

"O yes, you will," said Mr. Carl. "I am sure you will; I am going to ask the Lord to help you stand it. I don't think I ever asked the Lord for anything but what he gave it if it was right I should have it, and I am sure this is a right thing to ask."

"But as to the writing to the boys," Miss Laura said. "I am going to ask a favor of you."

"Well?" he replied inquiringly.

"May I not write to them, and tell them what I know of the matter?"

"Why, certainly; but I meant I would not like to have some other person write to them or get the word to them before we had told them the facts, for fear that some exaggerated report or distorted account might reach them."

"Well, I am anxious," she said, "to write them and tell what I know, and what I have seen and heard. Do you think it would be proper for me to tell them just what Mr. Jenkins said about Theodore?"

"O, I don't know," Mr. Carl said. "What he said may have some truth in it—probably has from his stand-point; and yet I believe it would not be best to excite their prejudice against their new friend on account of anything Jenkins may have said."

"Very well, I will leave out that part of it."

"Yet another thing," said Mr. Carl, "perhaps none of us had better write them anything about it until we see what the outcome will be with Mrs. Jacobus. We can not tell them now without telling them what happened to her, and that might needlessly alarm Jakey. If we should wait, and she should get well after a few days, we would have much more to tell; and if we should wait, and she should not get well, then we would know the worst, and it would be better for Jakey, perhaps, to know all and be done with it, than to keep him in suspense."

"I believe you are right," Miss Laura said. "We can afford to wait; in either case it would be best to wait, so I will not send any word at all until you think it is the proper time."

"I don't wish to control your actions in the

matter," Mr. Carl said; "but, in my judgment, a few days more will not make any difference in this matter. Perhaps, by that time, I can tell more than I know now; for I don't intend to give up the search until I have reached the truth."

The day was waning fast, and the little party were several miles from home. Mrs. Jacobus had tossed restlessly on the lap of Miss Laura, as she patiently held her head, and talked incoherently of many things; but at no time did she reply to any of the questions asked her by either of her companions; at no time did she open her eyes. And Miss Laura noted with increasing alarm that the fever grew in violence, and that her patient's face had lost its wonted paleness, and now glowed with bright red spots upon either cheek.

Whenever opportunity afforded, they had stopped at farm-houses and procured fresh water, with which they bathed her face and moistened her parched lips.

The sun had gone down an hour before, when they drove up to the door of Mr. Carl's house and were greeted by Mrs. Carl, who could not refrain from an exclamation of surprise and sorrow when she had been briefly told of the result of that day's expedition.



Chapter X.

A DARING DEED.

THE day came for the regiment to leave Mattoon for the South. That morning they were up early, had three days' rations cooked and in their haversacks. They waited in line for several hours, but still the train to bear them away did not come. To relieve them of the tediousness of inactive waiting, Colonel Smith decided to put them through the battalion drill.

He rode a spirited black horse—one that was unused to military display, that had never faced the flashing of a thousand bright bayonets, nor heard the clatter of sword-scabbards, nor seen the sweep of companies as they wheeled into line; and all these excited him, and so frightened him that he reared and plunged and pranced about in an alarming style. The colonel, however, kept his seat, and was cool and imposing amidst his steed's cavorting.

But he made an unfortunate move,—ordering the battalion, “at double-quick, on the right

by file into line." He put spurs to his horse, to gallop around to the front of the newly formed line, and was admiring the promptness and precision with which they had come to the proper position, when his horse reared, plunged forward, and rushed down the front of the regiment. The colonel pulled on the reins, when the bit parted at the middle, dropped out of the horse's mouth, and almost unseated the rider as he fell backward on the saddle when the bit gave way. Instantly the colonel recovered his position, but the horse, feeling himself free, reared again, and again dashed forward, threatening the colonel's life and imperiling the lives of the soldiers toward whom he was rushing in a frenzy of fright.

All hearts stood still. All eyes were on the mad steed and his helpless rider. All were fixed with fear, and benumbed with a sense of their powerlessness. Not all—for Theodore saw the danger, and he saw a way to avert disaster to others, even though it should prove fatal to himself.

He flung his gun from him, threw off his cap, and leaped at the horse's head as he dashed by. He clung to his neck one second, and the next seized his nostrils with one hand, his foretop with the other, and swung his whole weight on the horse's head, pulling it down

until the nose touched the ground, and the fierce animal stopped.

The colonel leaped from the saddle, despite his wounded leg, hastily twisted the reins about the horse's neck, and said to Theodore:

"A brave deed, nobly done, my boy. But see, you are hurt!"

And so he was. The iron-shod hoof had struck him above the knee, and had gashed the flesh to the bone. His arms had been strained fearfully in that short, sharp, but decisive contest. His head was bleeding, and what other injuries he had received, only a surgical examination could discover.

The surgeon was there in an instant. He took Theodore in charge, and listened to directions given by the colonel in a low tone.

The carriage of a citizen who had driven out to see the troops maneuver was procured, and Theodore taken to a private residence to have his wounds dressed.

Another horse was brought the colonel, and the drill continued until the train arrived.

Then the men were marched to the depot, and embarked on the cars for the South. Babbitt and Jakey felt their hearts bound in pride when Theodore so heroically saved the colonel's life, but when they marched away and left him behind, they were sorrowful beyond expression.

But he was not left behind! He insisted on going, and the doctors took him to the train and put him aboard the cars.

Miss Lou was there to see the regiment leave. As soon as he could get away from the troops, the colonel sought her in the hotel, and told her all the particulars of the rescue.

"Never in battle did I feel so near death as when the bit broke," he said, yet trembling from excitement and exhaustion.

"Never were you nearer death," Miss Lou replied, earnestly. "I shudder yet, when I think of it."

"I tell you, sister, I have no time now for details; but if we *must* adopt some one in Oswald's place, this brave lad must be the one."

"I should say so, too, brother," she answered. "And have you yet learned his name?"

"Yes, indirectly; but I shall ask him as soon as we get under way to-night."

"And what is it?"

"Theodore, I think; but I am not sure, and can not remember the last name."

"Brother—" Miss Lou hesitated, and smiled faintly, and then said: "Shadows and straws! Why can we not have something better?"

"What now?" he asked, though he well knew what she meant.

"If this one could only be the real one!"

"If!" he said, with a sigh.

"I know, brother, there is the 'if,' but how romantic an 'if' it is!"

"Entirely too much so. But, hark! that is the whistle. I must go. Good-bye, once more!"

"Good-bye, brother dear! God be with you—and *him*."

"Good-bye! but do not build on *that*; it is only a straw!"

The train was already beginning to move when the colonel limped across the platform and swung on to the officers' car, at the rear of the long line of freight-cars that had been provided to carry the troops South, though there were a few cars of a better grade in the train.

At first slowly, until outside the town limits, and then rapidly, the two puffing engines dragged the crowded cars southward.



Chapter XI.

LIGHT OUT OF DARKNESS.

THE train sped on at a furious rate, roaring through deep cuts, rattling across long trestles, gliding over dead levels, the clickety-clack of the wheels against the ends of the rails making a weird music that seemed to soothe the restless spirits aboard the cars, and the more so because of its very monotony.

Night had come and enveloped all in total darkness, except what light was given by a few dimly-burning lamps swung from the roof of the cars.

Jakey and Babbitt, as soon as they had deposited their accouterments, got a seat next to Theodore, and plied him with questions relative to the accident and how he felt. Babbitt said:

"You are hurt bad enough to have staid and been doctored instead of coming with us, and you could have followed on some other train."

"So I could," Theodore replied; "but I did not want to. The fear that I would have to stay was all that worried me. As it is, I did n't get to march with you down to the depot; but I saw you go by. The house where they took me to have the bandages put on was right near the street, and I watched you from the window, even while they were tying up my leg. It was a pretty sight, the hundreds of men marching steadily, their guns at a right-shoulder, and the bayonets gleaming in the sunlight. The very sight of it made me think there is something in life worth living for."

Babbitt and Jakey were surprised at the enthusiasm manifested by Theodore, and quite as much surprised by the ease with which he seemed to express his ideas; for they had so far had no intimation of any school privileges Theodore had had, and Babbitt felt that, with all his training at school, and all the reading it had been his privilege to do, he had not nearly so clear a mind nor so fluent a language as Theodore; so, though it was a departure from the subject of their conversation, he abruptly asked:

"Where did you ever go to school?"

"I never went to school," Theodore said, smiling; "and I suppose, to be strictly honest, I must give old Jenkins credit. He was a great

reader, and he taught me to read, and when I was quite young made me read. When I was older I read because I wanted to; but I must say that he helped me to read; and though he was so cross and at times so cruel, he seemed to take a delight in having me tell him about things that I had read, while he would quiz me to see if I understood as he did. That Jenkins is a queer man anyway."

Babbitt did not care to question him further on this line, so he gave his attention to such arrangements of articles about Theodore as he thought would conduce to his comfort, and perhaps prepare a place where he could sleep during the night.

There was not much prospect, however, of any one sleeping a very great deal that night on that train. No stops were made at any of the stations, except where it was necessary for the engines to take either water or wood, or both; consequently there was no effort on the part of the officers to keep a guard over the men, and they freely passed from one car to another, laughing, joking, and playing pranks upon one another.

However, the car in which Theodore and his friends had found seats was less disturbed by the wandering minstrels and chronic jokers than the others; for among most of them there was

the suspicion that it was reserved entirely for officers. It was also better lighted than the other cars, and it was quite possible to discern the features of one if you sat close to him. The roar and rattle of the cars, however, over a road which was not particularly smooth, made conversation difficult. It was necessary to ask and answer questions in a very loud tone to carry on conversation at all. For this reason, it was only at long intervals that anything was said by the boys to each other.

Some time after ten o'clock the door opened near where Theodore sat, and an officer entered, closed the door after him, and peered into the faces of those nearest, as if searching for some one. At first he stood with his back to Theodore. When he had turned about he quickly recognized him in the dim light by the bandages about his head and arm and leg.

"Well, how do you get along, my friend?" he said, seating himself in the place vacated by Babbitt in front of Theodore.

"Very well."

"Are you suffering much pain?"

"Not much. My head feels a little sore and my arm pains me, but the leg is all right."

The questioner was no other than Colonel Smith. He had come, as he said he would, to make further inquiries about Theodore before

he should retire for the night, as a sleeping-car had been provided for the regimental officers. For the reasons already mentioned, he found it very difficult to talk with his wounded friend; but he sat and looked at him with a tenderness that a father or an elder brother might have shown. The colonel was a handsome man— young, full of vigor, with bright eyes, intelligent face, and commanding figure, and possessed a kindliness of manner that was sure to win him friends wherever he went. Taking out a notebook and pencil, he asked:

“What is your name?”

“Theodore Tompkins.”

After making a minute of this as well as he could, bracing himself to steady his hand against the roll and pitch of the car, he looked up and asked again:

“What is your father’s name?”

Theodore did not reply. He looked at the colonel, glanced at Babbitt, and remained silent. The colonel supposed that he had not heard the question distinctly, so, lifting his voice still higher, he asked:

“What is your father’s name? Where does he live?” And then, that Theodore might understand why he asked, he said: “I must write to him and tell him about what you have done for me.”

Theodore shook his head and looked downward. The colonel again supposed that he had not heard, or had misunderstood; so, rising, he leaned over Theodore until his face was quite close to that of the boy, and said:

"If you will give me your father's address, I will write to him. I want to tell him how thankful I am that he has as brave a boy as you."

Theodore looked up, and with a countenance that was full of grief, and a lip which quivered, he said:

"I have no father!"

The colonel had prepared to write the name when it should be given him; but when he heard these words, gave a little exclamation of surprise, and, leaning over, said:

"Your mother's name?"

Again Theodore shook his head, and, lifting his eyes toward the officer, replied:

"I have no mother."

The colonel straightened himself up, and, clinging to one of the hat-racks near by with one hand, holding his note-book and pencil in the other, he gazed long and steadily into the face of Theodore, showing distinctly that he was deeply touched by the apparent loneliness of his young friend. There occurred to him another question—a question which had been

asked him at one time when he was taken into the hospital for treatment, after having been wounded at Shiloh, so he said to Theodore:

"Who is your next friend?"

Theodore smiled at this, and, with his well arm pointing toward Babbitt, said:

"There he is."

The colonel faced half about, and seeing to whom Theodore referred, he said:

"O, I see! But is there not some one to whom I may write? Have you not left some one behind?"

Again Theodore shook his head, and said, sadly:

"No one that I care for."

Putting his note-book back into his pocket, and replacing his pencil, the colonel leaned over and said, amid the roar and rattle of the car:

"You have—told me—this—young—soldier—is—your next—friend. Let *me*—be the—next one—to him"—touching himself with his forefinger.

The excitement of the day, the exhaustion of his wounds, and the emotions stirred up by the questions the colonel had propounded were too much for Theodore, and he was obliged to hide his eyes for a moment and to brush away the tears that came unbidden as he thought of the persistent kindness of the officer, and of

what his request implied. The colonel remained standing, supporting himself as before, intending to bid the boy farewell and return to his own car. However, just at that instant the speed of the train slackened perceptibly; the noise which had before made conversation so difficult ceased in part, and he tarried a moment, that he might make further inquiries about Theodore.

Presently the train came to a stand-still, and all was quiet excepting the noise that came from the forward part, where men were busily throwing wood into the tender from the yard in the midst of the woods where the train had halted. The colonel improved this opportunity to take his seat in front of Theodore, and, in a low voice, which was not heard by any except the ears it was intended for—Theodore's, Babbitt's, and Jakey's—said:

“Boys, I am a soldier and an officer, and am proud of my rank and of my privilege, but I was a man before I was either officer or soldier, and I am not ashamed of my manhood; so let us forget just for a moment that I am an officer, and that you are soldiers under my command. Theodore, I want to say to you that my heart beats in sincere sympathy. You have said that you have no father, no mother, and no one behind that you care anything for. I want to say for your encouragement that I have no father

and no mother, and only a sister behind that I care anything for. I would like to tell you some time, if we have an opportunity, of my life, but I can not to-night, of course. But let me tell you this: Years ago my father and mother, myself, my sister, and a baby brother were making a trip up the Missouri River, my father intending to make some investments in the West, and had taken us along for company, and that we might see the wild country, or portions of it, through which we were to go. Suddenly, at the very hour of midnight, in one of the darkest nights it seemed to me I ever saw, the boiler of the boat exploded, and we were all tossed up in the air, and some of us remember how, after the noise of the explosion, there was silence and darkness, the screams of some and the struggles of the many in the water. What was left of the boat took fire, of course, and the river was lighted up by the flames of its burning. My sister and I were rescued, I scarcely know how, but we were picked up by some passing boat. My father and mother and baby brother I have never seen or heard of since."

He arose here, for the train had begun to move on. Reaching out his hand to Theodore, he said:

"Good-bye; we will see each other again some time;" and then returned to his own car.

Babbitt and Jakey came nearer to where

Theodore sat, and they could distinctly see, even by the dim light of the lamp overhead, that there was a gleam of hope in Theodore's face. The knowledge that some other person had suffered a bereavement like his, or more terrible, if anything, comforted him in a strange way, and he felt now not so much alone as he had before.

The night wore away finally, and when the dawn of another day came, the cars were rapidly rolling through a country that was very different from anything that Babbitt had seen in all his life. He had been accustomed to the broad, level, treeless prairies, to the new, bright, and cheerful-appearing homes of the people who lived in those prairie villages or upon the prairie-farms.

As he looked out of the little windows of the car, he could see here and there a dilapidated log house sitting in a small clearing, surrounded on all sides by a dense forest. The road itself was not straight and smooth like the railroads across the prairies, but was crooked, winding in and out around the hills, plunging through the deep cuts, and making such sudden turns that the train would assume the form of a letter S, as it dragged itself slowly along.

So far there had been nothing to eat or drink except what food they had been able to take from their haversacks; nor had there been

any opportunity for sleeping more than an occasional nap, and all were tired and cramped with the long, tedious ride in the crowded cars. For several hours they continued their slow course until finally, just before noon, the train came to a stand-still, and the voices of the officers were heard calling loudly to the men:

“FALL IN! FALL IN!”

They immediately grabbed their guns and their accouterments, and prepared to disembark. When they had done so, they found themselves in line on the levee of the Ohio River, at the city of Cairo, Illinois.



Chapter XII.

THE COLONEL'S STORY.

WHEN the regiment reached Memphis, after a stay of a few days in Cairo, Babbitt was surprised by an order to report at the colonel's head-quarters. Leaving his mess, which consisted of himself, Jakey, Theodore, and George Patton, a new-found friend, he saluted the sentinel in front of the colonel's tent, and said:

"I have been told to report to the colonel."

Just at this moment the colonel's orderly came out of the tent, and the guard said to him:

"This corporal has been ordered to report to the colonel."

The orderly turned about and said:

"Colonel, here is a corporal who has been ordered to report to you."

Colonel Smith arose and came to the door of the tent, and, seeing who he was, said kindly:

"Yes, Corporal, I sent for you. There are

some things that I would like to have done—some arranging of articles about my tent and head-quarters—and I wish you would go back to the company and tell the captain to have detailed for you four men, or four with yourself,” he said, correcting the command, “then report to me here.”

Babbitt returned to company head-quarters and delivered the message, and was delighted when the captain said:

“Very well; I will detail your mess. Go and take them over to the head-quarters.” He then called the orderly sergeant and said to him: “I have detailed the Little Corporal’s mess to report for duty at regimental head-quarters.”

Babbitt hastened to his tent, where the other three were resting, the afternoon drill having quite fatigued Jakey and George, and, without telling the boys what the colonel wanted, said with what seriousness he could under the circumstances:

“Fall in!”

The boys, of course, thought it was a joke, and commenced to guy him, and cried out to him:

“*You* fall in!”

He, however, insisted that it was the order of the captain, and that to save themselves from

reprimand they had better obey. Then George spoke up and said:

"A nice how d'y' do! I wonder if Captain Mooney knew who were in your mess?"

"I do n't know," said Babbitt, beginning to catch the drift of George's remark. "I know this: that he told me to take my mess and report at the regiment head-quarters for duty, and he told the orderly the same thing."

"But you just look there once," said George, pointing to his coat, which hung up against the pole at the further end of the tent.

"Well, I am not to be blamed for that!" said Babbitt, laughing heartily when he saw that the captain's order, if obeyed, involved the putting of the sergeant under the command of the corporal, a thing which even soldiers of their experience could not tolerate. "What shall I do?" said Babbitt. "Shall I report that one of my mess refuses duty?"

"O no!" said George, quickly. "I will tell you; just for the appearance of the thing, I will borrow somebody else's coat and leave mine here. Nobody will know the difference."

This was done, and gladly done, by George; for he would have regretted very much to have missed the opportunity of visiting regiment head-quarters, and in assisting in whatever work might be needed there, notwithstanding

he had to leave behind his coat adorned with a sergeant's chevrons.

When they had reported for duty—Theodore being in a too dilapidated condition to do any kind of work, but insisting on going—they were assigned to the lifting about of several boxes and chests, and similar tasks, the colonel remarking to his orderly that there were some messages he would like carried to the town, and saying to the guard who had stood by the door that he might report again to his company, as he probably would not need him now that he had the corporal's squad here. There was a plan in this maneuver; for the colonel desired to have his tent to himself and the boys.

Fortunately he was not unacquainted with George. Indeed, he had known his parents previous to the war. And although Jakey was not known to him, yet, because of Theodore's friendship, he could make no objection to his presence. After awhile he called them into the tent, and bade them be seated, and then made inquiries as to Theodore's condition and how he was improving, and, in one way or another, directed the conversation until it was easy for him, and without any abruptness, to say:

"I promised you, Theodore, some time to tell you more particularly about that night on the Missouri. This is as good a time as any.

There is photographed in my memory the picture of our state-room that night just after supper had been served. It was a double state-room, provided with an upper and lower berth on each side. It was spacious, richly carpeted, and well lighted. We—sister and I—had gathered in the room, and mother, who occupied one of the lower berths, had undressed my little brother for bed. He was very playful, and she was gratifying his humor and tossing him about in the berth, tickling him on this side and on that, and gurgling him under the chin, snatching him up in her arms to toss him down again, and rolling him over and over in very exuberance of joy, while he all the time was laughing and screaming with delight.

“While she was at this, father came in. I can see now how father sat down on the edge of the berth beside which my mother was kneeling, the baby rolling and tumbling before her, while I stood just behind her, and my sister leaned on father’s shoulder and watched the antics of our baby boy. Tiring of play after awhile, he noticed the gold locket which my mother wore about her neck, attached to a heavy gold chain, and, reaching up, took hold of it, and as plainly as it was possible for one who could not talk distinctly, expressed a desire to have it about his own neck. Mother quickly

unclasped the chain and put it about his neck, the rest of us the meanwhile watching and applauding. He was very proud of the jewel, and seemed more intent on examining it than on frolicking as he had before. Father, myself, and my sister left the state-room and went out for a stroll around the boat.

“By and by we returned. Mother was sitting on the berth, a paper in her hand, reading. Our baby brother was lying asleep, his head on the pillow, his little gown unfastened at the throat and turned back on both sides, laying bare his white neck and breast. Around the neck clung the golden chain. On his breast lay the little locket. I remember that his feet were drawn partly up, his gown pulled up above his knees, and that we noticed how like a picture he lay—feet, legs, and neck bare; face white and pink; his eyes closed, the long lashes drooping heavily on his pretty face. As we came in, mother dropped her paper in her lap, and, turning to father, said: ‘Was ever anything so lovely?’ He said: ‘He is an angel indeed!’ Then I remember that my sister went up, and, although mother shook her finger warningly at her, she said, by way of apology, pushing mother’s hand away gently, ‘I can’t help it; I must;’ and, stooping down, kissed his rosy lips. The kiss did not awaken him entirely,

but he moved and turned his face away and sighed. Then I remember that mother leaned over, and, pressing her cheek against his, said soothingly: 'Ah, my little darling, do not sigh; your mother's here!' This seemed to awaken him, and he turned his face outward again, and threw himself over on the bed, reaching out one arm, encircling his mother's neck with it. Fearing she might waken him, she did not release his arm at once, but remained in that position, her face on the pillow close to his, his arm around her neck, while she, with one hand, reached under and clasped his remaining hand. Lest we should disturb him, father motioned us out into the cabin, and we left them.

"After an hour or more we returned, but the light had been turned low. Mother had retired, and out of consideration for her and the baby, with no noise, we crept softly into our beds, my sister occupying the berth under me, I the upper berth, and father occupying the berth over mother and the baby. I went to sleep; how long I slept I do not know. When I awoke it was as I was going up into the air. Presently I felt myself coming down. An instant later I plunged into the waters of the Missouri. It seemed that I was going to the bottom despite my efforts to swim; but I came to the top and struck out vigorously, and for-

tunately found a large piece of the wreckage of the boat and knew I was safe. Up to this time there was dense darkness all about me; but suddenly the flames shot up from the wreck and lighted the river brilliantly. Not ten feet from me my sister floated, holding tight to a huge plank. She was more dead than alive. Her bare arms lay across the plank, her fingers clasping the edge farthest away. Her head was thrown back to keep her mouth and nose above the water. Her eyes were closed, and a most agonizing expression of despair held her features fast in hard lines of hopeless endeavor. Her mass of hair floated behind her, and muddy water dripped from the ringlets about her forehead. I pushed my piece of the wreck, which was large enough to hold several persons, over toward her, and, clinging to it with one arm, reached out the other and clasped her about the waist, and said gently, yet with a bounding heart: 'O, my darling sister, your brother has come to save you!' She was so nearly unconscious that she did not reply, except to lean her head toward me and moan piteously. I cheered her all I could, and by my help she crawled on to the wreckage, but swooned away. At that instant what was left of the burning boat went down, and thick darkness encompassed us again.

"Then I heard a sound that rings in my ears until this day. It was a baby's voice crying, and calling out, "Mamma! papa! mamma!" I knew there was only one baby on that boat, and that baby was my brother. I strained my ears, kneeling on that raft by my sister to catch the sound of mother's voice answering the cry of her darling. I could hear others talking, but not a voice answered baby's cry. I did not speak. I could not. I tried to call to the darling, but my throat was choked, and I could only sob and pray. For some time I heard the pitiful cry, 'Mamma, up! Mamma, dark! Mamma, up!' That is the way our baby would call in the night if, by chance, the light should go out. He seemed to be floating with us, but on the opposite side of the river. After awhile he ceased to cry. When the first dawn of day came, I strained my eyes to find some sign of him, hoping to catch a glimpse of his curly head, but in vain. Just at sunrise we were picked up by a passing boat. Sister and I were kindly provided with clothes, for we had only our night-dresses, and were taken to St. Louis, where father had many friends, who vied with each other in caring for us.

"The papers, for several days, contained accounts of the disaster and printed lists of the rescued. One day I saw a statement that a

baby had been rescued far down the river, and supposably was from the ill-fated steamer. It said the child was found securely lashed by strips of what appeared to be a lady's night-robe, judging from the texture of the cloth and the bits of lace and embroidery with it. It said the child was found and was being cared for by a fisherman, who had early gone to the river to take up his lines. My father's friends left no effort untried to find that fisherman, but without success."

The colonel ceased speaking, and sat with bowed head. The little group had listened to the recital with breathless interest, and all sighed sadly when the colonel finished his story.

"So we all have our sorrows," he said, after awhile, lifting his head and smiling on Theodore.

"Colonel," said Babbitt, "may I say something?"

"Certainly, Corporal, say on."

"These four of us, and some folks at home, have formed a little society to help find Theodore's parents when we get home, and I thought, maybe, you would like to join."

Babbitt hurried through this statement, and quit quite out of breath, scarcely knowing what he had said.

"Why, yes, I believe I would," said the colonel, with a show of hesitation in his manner.

"But maybe the rest of the boys would have something to say to that," he continued, looking around upon the group.

"I am quite sure," said George, "that there can be no objection on our part."

"Indeed," said Theodore, with embarrassment, "we would like to have you become one of our society, for maybe—" and he paused a moment as if uncertain whether he should say what was on his mind or not, but finally continued, "maybe we could help you find your brother."

"Indeed," said the colonel, brightening, "that is a thought that had not occurred to me, and I am sure that I shall not hesitate to have my name enrolled as a member of your society."

"There are one or two things," said Babbitt, "that each member of our society is required to observe secrecy about; but as they are both things that perhaps you will never know, there is no reason why we should require you never to speak of them, Colonel."

"Well," he laughed, "you certainly can not trust me to keep them if you never give them to me!"

Babbitt was confused by this reply, but he gathered up his wits sufficiently to say:

"It is not that we do not wish to trust you with the secrets, Colonel; but I believe we

had better not tell you now ; we may some time. It is only something about ourselves."

"Very well," replied the colonel, "I shall not insist on knowing what could not be used by me ; and I am sure that I can trust you boys to keep my secret for me," he continued, with a merry twinkle in his eye.

"I see, Colonel," said George, "that you are disposed to twit the boys ; but I assure you that it is a very small matter that constitutes the secret of this society. And, perhaps, you will understand better if I say, as you already know, however, that all societies have what are called degrees, the secrets of which are given up to members a little at a time."

"Very well, then, I suppose I shall consider myself a member of the society in the first degree, and shall wait patiently until I may be intrusted with its further secrets."

At this juncture in their conversation one of the captains called to make some inquiries of the colonel about certain orders that had been issued ; and the boys were told that they might return to their company, as the duty for which they had been summoned had been well done.

When they were again snugly stowed away in their tents, George said he doubted whether they had done just the right thing in asking the colonel to become a member of their society,

and hesitating to give him all the facts connected therewith.

"It does not look just fair," said Babbitt; "but you know it is different with him. Theodore, here, does not care so much about us boys knowing about that mark; Jakey is not ashamed for us to know about his mother; but what is the use of going and telling everybody, and then telling them not to tell anybody else."

"I will tell you," said George; "suppose we drop that part of our society, and say no more about it."

"That is a fact," assented Babbitt; "that is what we ought to have done long ago. Who knows anything about Theodore's mark except us boys? Father and mother don't know; Miss Laura and Mrs. Jacobus, neither of them knows; so it is all right for the colonel, anyway. He belongs to the degree that father and mother and the rest of them do."

"That is a happy thought," said Theodore. "I will never be reluctant any more about anybody else joining if we are going to let this secret part drop right here."

"But suppose, some time," suggested Jakey, "the colonel should ask us what the secret is—I don't mean some time now—but some time by and by; at home, maybe?"

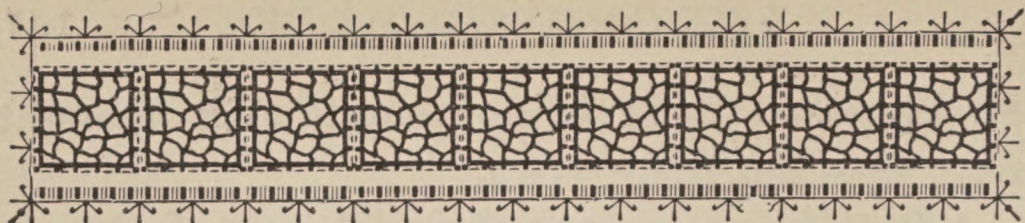
"Well," said Babbitt, "before long we will

tell him that there is no secret. We thought there was, but there is n't."

"Don't you suppose he will want to know, then, what we thought was a secret?" said Theodore.

"No," said Babbitt. "He is a man, and he has other things to think about; he is n't concerned about that."

Now, the secret they hesitated about giving to the colonel was the discovery that Theodore's back, between the shoulders, was disfigured by a patch of very black, stiff, and closely-growing hair. Babbitt and Jakey discovered this when the three were putting on their new uniforms, and Theodore had pledged the two to secrecy, and they, in turn, had pledged George.



Chapter XIII.

THEODORE'S THEORY.

THAT night there was firing on the pickets, and the regiment was hurriedly formed, and Captain Mooney's company detailed to make a reconnoissance. No enemy was found, and they returned to camp, glad the colonel found them so prompt to respond to the call to arms.

Not until they were crawling into their tent did Babbitt find out that Theodore had been on the quick march. He expressed surprise, and also fear lest his wounds would suffer on account of premature exertion on his part. Theodore silenced all objections by saying :

"Did n't you go, Babbitt? and did n't Jakey, and did n't George, and did n't I know for certain that the colonel would go? Do you suppose that anything could have tempted me to stay behind when you all were at the front?" And then, after a pause, in a lower tone, and with intenser feeling, he said: "There is something in me that draws me out toward that

colonel of ours. I want to be where he is; and you may depend on it that as long as this service lasts I am not going to lose sight of him."

Then Sergeant Patton spoke up, saying:

"I guess all the boys feel that way."

"Perhaps all the boys do like the colonel," said Theodore; "but I am sure that not one of them can feel toward him as I do."

"You don't mean anything about what he was telling us, do you?" said Babbitt.

"I don't know," said Theodore; "I am afraid to believe it, and yet I want to." After hesitating again for a few minutes, he and the rest of them having settled themselves down again under their blankets, he said: "If you won't laugh at me, I will tell you something."

"You may depend on it that we won't laugh at you," said George, "unless it is something awfully funny that you are going to tell."

"No, it isn't funny," said Theodore; "very far from it; and yet you may think that my telling such a thing is funny, or, at least, unreasonable, and you may laugh me to scorn."

"Now, it is simply this," continued Theodore. "But pshaw, boys, I need not say it; but if I do say it, I want you to know that it is one of our secrets—for awhile, at any rate."

"It's a go," said Babbitt, "whatever you tell us we will keep—you know that."

"Well, it is this—somehow I am afraid to tell it. I may be building castles in the air; I may be indulging false hope; but remember, I would not have you speak of it for the world—not yet."

He ceased to speak, and the boys remained silent. Finally, summoning all his courage, he commenced; and spoke rapidly, lest he should change his mind, and keep the precious secret to himself when he wanted to share it with his friends, and said:

"Many and many a time have I seen at Jenkins's house a heavy gold chain, with a locket attached—"

"Great Scott!" exclaimed George, raising himself on his hands and knees.

Babbitt quickly turned over and sat upright, and, reaching out his hand, laid hold of the well shoulder of Theodore, and, shaking it violently, said:

"You do n't mean it!"

Jakey, the least impressible and the least demonstrative of all, and the least imaginative, but the most practical, perhaps, in many cases, said:

"Why do n't you tell about that to the colonel?"

If it had not been dark they would have seen a look of contempt and of indignation on

Theodore's face, while he blushed deeply as he said:

"Tell the colonel! How could I ever prove what I should say? And how quickly he would guess that I was taking advantage of his confidence and trying to impose upon him—setting up a claim, which I could not support by any evidence except my own word, to kinship with him. No, sir; I would die first!"

Theodore was sitting upright, and, as he said these words, he bowed his head and buried his face between his knees. George was the first to speak by exclaiming again: "Great Scott!" and that was the extent of his profanity; he never ventured more than that.

Babbitt said: "I intend to write home at once, and tell father about it."

"Hold on!" said Theodore, lifting his head. "What did you promise me before I told you this?"

"Well," laughed Babbitt, "I remember now; but I had no idea you were going to tell us anything like this. Let me write, won't you? Father will see about this."

"No, I can not," Theodore said, earnestly. "Besides, your father never could find out anything about it. You don't know Jenkins as I do."

"Great Scott!" said George, turning over

and lying down. "Two surprises in one night! It is more than I can stand."

"Of course," said Jakey, who had been thinking while the rest of them were talking; "there are lots of gold chains in the world, and lots of lockets. I suppose, more than likely, there are a hundred just like the one the colonel's mother had."

"Yes; but," said Babbitt, "what was old Jenkins doing with one? From all I can learn, he is n't the kind of a man to buy gold chains and lockets."

"I do n't know," said Theodore. "He has been a mystery to me ever since I have known him. It always seemed to me that he had something on his mind, as people say—something that worried him. We did not always live where he is living now."

All four of them were silent and busily thinking; and at last George spoke up again and said:

"Great Scott! Theodore, why did you make me promise I would not tell?"

"Because I did not want you to tell," said Theodore. "What is there to tell when you come to look at it right square in the face? What is there to tell except that I know a man that has a chain and locket? Anybody could say that. Of course, I have my own thoughts."

"Certainly," said Babbitt; "and we have ours. It seems to me as plain as day, that if you would only tell what you know, you may soon find out that the colonel is your brother, and you his."

"Great Scott!" said George, turning over again. "Have I got to carry this thing for a hundred days or more in my head, and not tell it?"

"That's about the size of it," said Jakey, laughing, in spite of himself, at George's great desire to rid himself of the secret.

About the last thing that any of them heard before they dropped off to sleep, was a half-smothered exclamation on the part of George: "Great Scott!"



Chapter XIV.

A MYSTERY.

THREE letters to the encampment for the Little Corporal's mess were brought in one mail by the chaplain. (Babbitt was known as "The Little Corporal," and his mess was named that, too.) One was for Jakey, from Miss Laura. He read it slowly; for, although the penmanship was of that kind which may be described as bold, even, and clear, he was not much accustomed to reading letters, and labored somewhat over this.

Babbitt's letter from his father had evidently been written after consultation with Miss Laura; for it said but little about Mrs. Jacobus, but dwelt almost entirely with their trip to Farmer Jenkins's house, and other facts which they had learned concerning Theodore. He read rapidly, and had completed his before Jakey had finished half of Miss Laura's.

"What's the news?" he said.

"I have n't got through yet," said Jakey,

continuing to read; "but there is lots of news as far as I have gone."

Babbitt could scarcely restrain himself; for the contents of his letter had awakened unusual interest, and he longed for an opportunity to see if Jakey's contained anything in addition to what he had learned, or if it could not make clear some of the unexplained things in his father's letter.

George was busy with his, and did not notice the aside talk between Jakey and Babbitt. Theodore, however, had no letter to read, and he was unintentionally all ears to what the boys had to say. Noticing his attempt at unconcern, and his effort to appear engaged in some trifling work, fixing his knapsack straps and examining the buttons on his coat to see if they were still secure, Babbitt said, though he hesitated whether it was best to say anything just then:

"You didn't get any letter, Thee, but the most of my letter is about you. It is from father, and I will let you see it if you wish."

Theodore colored slightly, and said:

"I would, of course, like to know if it concerns me; but I would rather you would tell me instead of my reading the letter. Perhaps your father would not like that."

Jakey said, pausing in his reading:

"My letter does not say much about Theo-

dore, but it says a good deal about somebody else."

Just at that instant George spoke up, his face assuming a seriousness which it had not shown before, though he did not appear to be addressing the other boys, and said, as if speaking to himself:

"That beats anything I ever heard of."

He continued to read; and, finally, after he had finished the letter, and was folding it to replace it in the envelope, he said:

"I can not account for it!"

The boys did not seem interested in this volunteered information, and he was not much concerned that they were so indifferent to what he had said. Seemingly preoccupied with thoughts of the contents of his letter, as he still held it in his hand, he crawled out of the tent, and leisurely walked off toward a shady nook, and sat down under a tree to re-read the missive. Really the boys were glad that he had felt disposed to go off by himself; for, while he was one of their little circle, he could not yet feel the real interest in the secret of Theodore's parentage that the others felt, and they naturally were more or less embarrassed and reserved in his presence.

Jakey seemed to labor so over his letter, though evidently much engaged with its con-

tents, that Babbitt suggested that unless it had something very personal he might read it aloud; "for you know," he said, "one of the first things that we thought about in our little society was writing letters and keeping each other posted on the things at home, and keeping them posted on the things that happened in camp."

Jakey handed the letter over to him gladly, and said:

"I wish you would, Babbitt. I ain't much on reading anything, especially letters. Maybe I would understand it if you would read it to me."

Miss Laura's letter commenced in a way which was calculated to stir the emotions of any one except Jakey Jacobus. It said, "My Dear Jakey," but he had not noticed this manner of addressing him; it did not seem to him that that meant anything. But it was the first thing that attracted Babbitt's quick eye; so, after reading that much aloud, he looked at Jakey, and smilingly said:

"Miss Laura has taken you in as one of her own boys, I see."

"Why, how is that?" said Jakey.

"Why, you see she calls you 'my dear Jakey.'"

But he was too unsentimental to be at all moved by this allusion; so Babbitt was obliged to proceed with the reading of the contents of

the letter to find something of more intense interest than the manner of addressing Jakey. The letter proved to be full of facts that, while not unexplainable, were such as to stir the thought of the dullest mind in an attempt to reach the conclusion toward which these facts pointed. Miss Laura said :

"I am writing to you to-day because your mother is not able to write. Now do not be frightened at that, Jakey ; she is in good hands and well cared for, for she is at Babbitt's home, and Mr. and Mrs. Carl are giving her all the attention she requires ; and I find it convenient to call in there about once a day, and sometimes oftener. I do n't know whether you noticed it—but the rest of us did—when you went away from home your mother was not in very good health ; and the excitement of your going, and some other things which have happened, have tended to make her nervous. Mr. Carl has said he would write to Babbitt and tell him about our trip out into the country to see Farmer Jenkins, so I need not tell you that. When we came home your mother was quite ill, had a high fever, and at times did not know what she was saying. She is better now ; we *hope* she will get well."

The "hope" in this letter was underscored, and to Babbitt meant more than the words themselves ; but Jakey had not noticed that

mark when he read the letter, and was now giving his attention wholly to the statement of facts as recorded by Miss Laura.

“There is something curious about what your mother says that I want to tell you of; and maybe you can explain it to us, for we don’t understand it. Now, don’t be frightened, Jakey. I would not have written to you at all until your mother was better, only that I thought it would be best for me to write now, and may be you could tell something more about the things that she talks of. Since the day that we got home from Jenkins’s, she seems to have forgotten almost everything that has happened in her life except (now, I know you will be glad to read this) your father and yourself. We tried to have her recall some of the things that occurred on the way down to Jenkins’s and on the way back, but she does not remember anything. We have tried to have her think of things which happened here in our town since the war commenced, but she always shakes her head and says: ‘I can’t remember.’ The doctor says this is not strange, and you need not be alarmed about that, for oftentimes people’s memories get to be very poor as they grow older. But there is one thing that your mother talks about whenever any one can be found to listen to her; that is, whenever Mr. or Mrs.

Carl or myself, for we are about the only ones that see her; she does not care to see other people; and, although they call and ask about her, they very seldom go to her bedside. The other day, while I was sitting by her, she turned her face toward me, and, with a very happy countenance, began to tell me about—now I know you will be startled when I write the word that she said—she began to tell me about '*Theodore*'—not your friend Theodore, perhaps, but some little boy that she knew. As far as I could understand her, there was a very handsome and smart and lovable child that either got lost, or was killed accidentally, or died suddenly, I can not tell which, that she knows about. She insists that his name is Theodore. We tried to make her see that she has got the wrong name; that she has heard us talk about Theodore, and that some way she has forgotten the little boy's name, and has taken up this name we have talked so much about; but she always shakes her head and says 'No,' and insists on having it 'Theodore.' When you come home I may be able to tell you some little facts about what your mother says, that I can not very well write or make you understand by writing; but what I want to know now is whether you ever had a brother by the name of Theodore, and if you had, if he died young, or if anything happened to

him that you ever heard your mother tell about. She insists, most of the time, although she does not say clearly, that this beautiful child was carried away, and she has spoken often of having led him about by the hand, or of having rocked him to sleep in her arms, and of having seen him in different places or situations; and yet, whenever we ask her if this child that she talks about was her child, she does not seem to know what we mean, or if she does know, does not care to answer."

While Babbitt was reading these words, an occasional glance from the paper toward Jakey showed him that the poor boy's heart was throbbing under intensest emotion, but that he had almost perfect control of himself, and at no time would give vent to his feelings; but, despite his efforts, once in awhile a tear would roll down his cheek and drop off on the blanket on which he was lying, face downward, supporting himself on his elbows.

As might be supposed, no one was more interested in the letter than Theodore. He was strangely stirred, and at times felt keenest disappointment when there was a hint that the child of which Mrs. Jacobus talked was a Theodore, and that that Theodore was himself. For some reason, he did not wish it to be that way.

Miss Laura concluded her letter by adding a few more lines :

“ My father has told me, Jakey, to write that you need not worry about your mother. I feel as if I ought to say, having said so much, that perhaps she will not get well.”

As Babbitt read these words his voice faltered, and he found it impossible to see the words which followed; for his own eyes were dim with tears. He was far less composed than Jakey. He simply dropped his head across his folded arms and buried his face for a moment in the blanket, and then quickly lifted himself and, with set features, listened to hear the conclusion of Miss Laura's letter. As soon as he could, Babbitt finished the reading:

“ *But whether she gets well or not—we hope she will*”—(underscored, every word of it) “ father says, ‘ Tell Jakey, there is a place for him at our home.’ ” And then, as if she would, in some way, dispel the clouds she supposed her words had caused to gather around Jakey's life, she said, in a lighter strain: “ You know we have lots of cows to milk, plenty of horses to feed and to drive, lots of errands to do at town, and a great many things to do on the farm, and it is a wonder to me that father has not had some one to come and live with us before. At any rate, we are going to expect you to be back.

We are going to look to you to be our boy. Write to me when you can.

“Faithfully yours, LAURA.”

As Babbitt folded this letter, and tucked it away in the envelope and passed it back to Jakey, he said:

“That is a mixture of sad and glad news, such as I hope will not come every day; for it breaks me right up;” and then he laughed to hide his feelings.

Theodore was silent.

“Now I must read you father’s,” said Babbitt, picking that letter up; and he read steadily the long letter which his father had written to him. The first part of it was taken up in giving an account of the trip to Jenkins’s house, and, as nearly as possible, a detailed account of all the conversation which occurred there, as well as reference to the part which Mrs. Jacobus had taken, and its effect upon the old farmer. He briefly mentioned the fact that Mrs. Jacobus was ill at their house, but was well taken care of, and that they hoped she would get well. He then said:

“I was determined to find out all that Jenkins knew about Theodore, if it were possible to extort the information from him by threats or reward; and so this week, in company with an officer, whom I took along simply for show, as

he had no papers to serve, hoping, if I failed in trying to persuade Jenkins to reveal what he knew of 'Theodore's ancestry, to call in the assistance of the officer, and by intimidation—for I think such a course would have been justifiable under the circumstances—compel him to tell us what we wanted to know.

“Lest I excite your curiosity unduly, and to save myself the trouble of writing a great many unimportant details, I must say right here that I failed to get what I went for; and this is why: The day before we made our visit, Mr. Jenkins had gone out into the timber, near his house, for the purpose of felling a tree to cut it up into wood. He selected the tree that he desired to have made into wood, and went to work on it with his ax, and had succeeded in chopping it off so that it started on its downward course; but when about one-third of the way down, it lodged against a smaller tree, and it seemed necessary, in order to get it to the ground, that the smaller tree should be cut. While he was cutting the smaller tree, the blows of his ax had shaken the other tree loose from the slight hold it had, and before he was aware that he was in danger, it fell, and one of the large limbs struck him on the head and shoulders and he was pinned to the ground. This was early in the morning. When dinner was ready, his wife

waited, but he did not come. She did not think strange of this, however, because he often would go away without leaving word when he would be back; and it was her habit to wait dinner until he should come, so she did not even go to look for him. When he had not come back by supper-time, she became thoroughly alarmed, and concluded to go in the direction she had seen him go that morning, and where she had heard him cutting, and make investigation. She did not see him, and, after wandering over the timber-lot for some time without discovering him, she was compelled to ask her neighbors for help. A search was instituted, and late at night, by the aid of torches and lanterns, they found him pinioned to the ground and unconscious, though yet alive. In this condition he was brought to his home, and that is the way we found him when we reached his home.

“Of course, he could tell us nothing, for he knew nothing, recognizing no one, not even his wife; and the physician said that his condition was exceedingly critical—the probabilities of his recovery very slight. We were about to take our leave without having made known to Mrs. Jenkins our errand, when she inquired if she could be of any service, or if we had any word to leave for her husband. She is quite an

intelligent lady, but has about her evidences of having a long time been subjected to the dictation and rule of a superior force. I felt that it would only be right that some statement should be made as to what we sought, but was surprised, as well as delighted, when she manifested great concern and said: 'Well, I don't care to tell you what I know until I can see what the result of Mr. Jenkins's hurt is. I can't endure the strain any longer on account of it.' She left us in their little sitting-room, and was gone a few minutes, when she returned, bearing a locket and golden chain in her hand. 'This,' she said, 'belongs to the boy. It came to us with him. He may have seen it, but he does not know it is his. My husband has insisted on our keeping it; but I feel that if you are his friend, and are so much concerned about him as to come to our house now the second time—for Mr. Jenkins told me about your being here before—I would rather that you would have this trinket than that I should keep it. It opens, and inside is a picture. I don't know that the boy has ever seen the picture. I am very certain that he never did. I do not know whose picture it is.' As she said this, she handed the locket and chain to me, and I have it now in my possession. I shall keep it until Theodore returns, unless he desires that I should send it

to him. I do not think, however, that that would be best; for he possibly might have it stolen from him or might lose it. I shall wait a week or ten days, and then go down to Jenkins's again. Perhaps by that time he will have so far recovered as to be able to tell me what he knows. I hope that he will not be offended by what his wife has done; for I fear for her sake if he should be. I judged, by the way she spoke, that she herself had given up all hope of his recovering from his hurt, and felt safe in parting with the trinket, which, for some reason I do not understand, he had kept for so many years."

There were some other matters in the letter of minor importance, about home affairs, which Babbitt did not read.

"There is something," he said again, "that needs to be explained in these two letters. It would seem, from what Theodore says, and what Mrs. Jenkins says, and what our colonel has told us, that we may have a clew to the secret of Theodore's parentage; and yet," Babbitt said, meditatively, "Mrs. Jacobus seems to know something which does not agree with that story. You remember father says that she told Jenkins that she knew who Theodore was, and that was before she had lost her memory. Miss Laura says that she is constantly talking about some boy—

bright and happy boy—who certainly, from what she says, must have been old enough to run around, to play, and perhaps to go alone, and she calls him Theodore. Now, the boy that Jenkins knew and the boy that Mrs. Jacobus knew are apparently the same, and yet Theodore can not remember of any person that would answer to Mrs. Jacobus—can you, Thee?”

Theodore shook his head, but said nothing.

“Then,” continued Babbitt, “Colonel Smith told us about the locket and chain, and Mrs. Jenkins says that this locket and chain came to her place with this boy. That would seem to show that he is—” Babbitt did not finish the sentence.

“I know what you mean,” said Theodore; “but that can not be;” and again he shook his head sadly.

At that instant George returned, and seemed in much better spirits than when he went away from the tent.

“Well, boys,” he said, “I suppose that you all got good news from home.”

“Yes,” said Babbitt, quietly.

“Well, so did I,” he said finally; “most of it at any rate, was good—all of it, as far as I am concerned, was good. But there was an old codger down by our town that people said was a perfect terror. I don’t know much about

him. I know he used to come to town always by himself, and would get into an argument if he could, on the street-corners or in some store, and he always argued that there was no God, no devil, no heaven, and no hell, and that a man would live always if he only thought so—there was no use in any one just lying down to die. I used to wonder, after hearing him talk, how he would die. Well, in a letter to-day, they say he is dead, and that he really killed himself; that is the report at our town. I don't understand how it could be, though."

Without any apparent interest in the matter, except to give respectful attention to the news which George had given them, Babbitt said:

"Who was that old man you are talking about?"

"They said his name was Jenkins," answered George.

At this Theodore quickly asked: "Where did he live, this man you are talking about?"

"Well, my home," said George, "is in Oconee, and he lived about ten miles from there."

"It must be the same, then," said Theodore, earnestly.

"What," said Babbitt, "the same as the man you lived with?"

"Yes, for we lived about ten miles from Oconee."

"I do not remember of having seen you," said George, "with the old man at any time. Did you live with him all the time?"

"Yes; but I never went to town with him. He generally went alone. Sometimes he sent me; but we never went together."

"That report as to his having committed suicide," said Babbitt, "is certainly wrong."

"Well, what do you know about it?" asked George.

"I think I know a great deal." He then took his father's letter from his pocket, and read to George such passages as referred to Jenkins's accident.

When he had concluded they were all agreed that the information which came from George's letter was unreliable—perhaps only an exaggerated rumor, arising from the peculiar manner of the Jenkins accident.

"But I wonder, now," said Theodore, "which we can rely on—the report that he is dead or that he is only seriously injured? What is the date of your letter, George?"

By comparison of dates, they found that the letters were written the same day; but as George's informant lived nearer the Jenkins home, they concluded that that report was the latest.

"Then," said Theodore, with the slightest

show of sadness in his manner, "Mr. Jenkins is dead;" and he fell to meditating, the rest of them remaining silent, until he said: "With all his meanness, there were some good things about him."

After a few minutes of further silence, in which they all seemed to be going over in mind the facts related by the several letters, George said, as though it had just occurred to him:

"Did Jenkins persuade you to believe as he does? Do you think there is no God?"

Theodore colored and hesitated a moment, and before he could reply, Babbitt interposed, and said kindly:

"That is one thing we have not explained to you, George, and if you would not feel offended, I wish you would drop that subject now for awhile."

"O!" said George, with elevated eye-brows; and nothing more was said by either of them—not that the subject had lost its interest, but somehow they were all under the impression that silence was best at that time. Besides this, opportunity for further conversation with Theodore was prevented by the colonel's orderly stopping in front of the tent and telling him the colonel desired to see him.

When he returned, the rest of the mess were just getting ready for supper, and, of course, the

business in hand at that time was attended to without any ceremony, Theodore remarking, by way of explanation of his call to the colonel's head-quarters, that he had been offered a place as clerk in the Commissary Department, as the colonel supposed it would be easier on him than doing the ordinary duty, considering the hurts which he had received.

"Of course, you will go," said Babbitt; "and I am glad that you will have such an easy place."

"Of course I will not go," said Theodore; "and if I did not know you so well, I would say it was unkind for you to think I would go."

"Well, I do n't know why you should n't," said George. "You would have nothing but a clerk's work to do--no standing guard, no going on picket, no daily drills, no roughing it with us, no anything, except just keeping the books straight."

"And that is just the reason why I will not go," said Theodore, "unless the colonel orders me to, and I do not think he will."

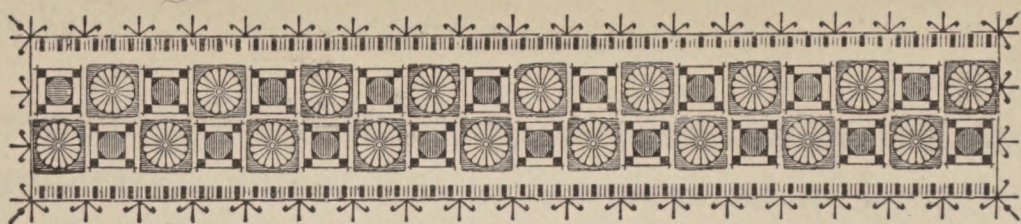
"What is the reason?" asked George.

"Just what you have said. There will be no picket duty, no guard duty, no drill, no bunking with you boys, and I am not going!"

The rest of them could but feel complimented by this declaration of Theodore, but did

not know in what way they had best answer him; so he said, as a clincher to his statement that he would not go: "Besides that, what do I know about keeping books? I never went to school a day in my life!"

"Well, come," said Babbitt, who had seen that the tin plates were properly placed on the rough-board table which had been constructed that day. "It is my time to act as waiter; so get your places, and we will have our supper and attend to the rest of the things afterward."



Chapter XV.

LIGHT IN DARK PLACES.

MR. CARL did not wait many days before he made his promised third trip to Jenkins's house. His only companion this time was Miss Laura.

Arriving at the place, they were greeted at the door by Mrs. Jenkins, and knew at once, by her attire and her manner, that her fears had been realized, and that Mr. Jenkins was dead. She at once recognized Mr. Carl, and seemed glad that he had come, and greeted Miss Laura with a smile of welcome. She was entirely alone, and after showing the visitors seats, took one herself, and with downcast eyes awaited their pleasure in making known the object of their call.

"I suppose, Mrs. Jenkins," said Mr. Carl, "that the worst is over, and that your husband is dead."

"Yes," she said, nervously toying with her hands.

"When, may I ask," Mr. Carl said, after a pause of a moment or two, "did he die?"

"The day after you were here, sir."

"You must, indeed, be very lonely without him," suggested Miss Laura in low tones, in a manner that was sincerely compassionate.

"Yes," she said, "I am."

"You know, Mrs. Jenkins," said Mr. Carl, "that you have our sincerest sympathy; and if it were in our power to do anything for you, we should be glad."

"Thank you," she said, "there is nothing that I need unless—" She paused, seemingly unable to proceed on account of her emotion.

"I hope that you will not hesitate to tell us whatever is on your mind, or to make known to us any wish that you may have, for I am sure you may depend upon us as your friends," said Mr. Carl, in such earnestness, and so apparent sincerity, that Mrs. Jenkins was encouraged, and said:

"O sir, that is just what I was going to say; I need nothing unless it is a friend."

"If you only knew us," said Miss Laura, "I am sure you would be willing to trust us as your friends; but as we are entire strangers, I can understand how you do not feel inclined to consider us as friends."

"Let me say," said Mr. Carl, "that you may have a Friend who can and will abide with you forever."

Mrs. Jenkins shook her head sadly. After a silence that almost became painful, Mr. Carl finally said :

"We had hoped to find Mr. Jenkins alive and able to talk. You can not fail to understand why we are here to-day. Is our coming to be in vain? Can you tell us anything of Theodore, who his parents are, if living, and where they are now?"

Mrs. Jenkins had heroically subdued her emotion, and lifted her face, which was now lighted by a faint smile, and said :

"Indeed, sir, I can now tell you. It is not right for me to say so, and I do not want to be untrue to one who was always true to me; but I am glad that I can tell, and that is what I could not do while Mr. Jenkins lived."

Greatly encouraged by this, Mr. Carl said, eagerly :

"But will you tell us? Can you explain all of it to us?"

"O, do!" said Miss Laura. "I am willing to give you almost anything that I have if you will but tell us what you know about this young man."

"I do not know very much," Mrs. Jenkins said. "I know some things. I will tell you all I know"—hesitating a moment—"and you can use what I tell you as you please."

She was evidently embarrassed and somewhat confused, so Mr. Carl said :

"Mrs. Jenkins, do not hurry yourself. Commence at the beginning, and tell us, as far as you can remember, all that you know ; and if you do not care, as you talk I will just jot down what you say."

She raised a frightened face to Mr. Carl as he said these words, and exclaimed :

"O, do not do that ! Can they not punish me for it ? He always said they could. You will not tell the officers, will you ? God knows I never meant it to be so. I know I loved that boy as my own child. You won't make me trouble about this, will you ?" she said, pleadingly. "I never wanted Theodore to go away."

"Please be quiet, Mrs. Jenkins," said Mr. Carl, soothingly ; "you need not fear us. I pledge you now that if anything you may tell me shall reflect upon you or render you liable to the law, I will do what I can to shield you from any of its penalties. What we want most of all is to clear up this mystery on Theodore's account."

"Well," she said, "I believe I can trust you. Maybe you can understand when I tell you, but Mr. Jenkins always said that if I told anything that he and I would both have to suffer for it."

Anxious to get at the facts which Mrs. Jenkins seemed to have in her possession, Mr. Carl

again spoke to her soothingly, and again pledged himself to shield her in every way possible. So, partly in her own way, and partly in answer to questions asked by Mr. Carl and Miss Laura, Mrs. Jenkins gave them this account:

"I think it was about twenty years ago—maybe not so long as that; I guess not more than fifteen years ago—that Mr. Jenkins concluded that we could find a home out West. Perhaps, he said, we would go on west until we should come to California—but, anyhow, we started west. There were only five of us in the party. There were two wagons. Mr. Jenkins and I had one of the wagons; the other wagon belonged to us, but there was a man wanted to go when we did, so Mr. Jenkins got him to drive his other wagon.

"We had got a great way out West, and had camped one night in the woods by the side of a great river. We were having a jolly time. Nothing had happened to disturb us in our journey, and we enjoyed going out there in that way, and were all counting on the time when we should have a nice home of our own. We were not poor people, either. We had good teams and good wagons, and Mr. Jenkins had plenty of money. We didn't want for anything—only one thing, and we could not buy that with money—at least, we never thought we could.

There were just two of us. The other man had a little boy. He was a pretty baby—he was not a baby, either; he was four or five years old. He was always with his father, and Mr. Jenkins said that he would just give all he had if we had a little boy like that.

“We had got up one morning, and were just getting our breakfast by the camp-fire, the little boy of our friends playing around and laughing and talking, and making us all laugh at his 'cute ways, making us all love him, when there came along the road near which we were camped a man, who carried a big basket of fish on one arm, and in the other a little baby boy. When he saw us he came to where we were, and said: 'Maybe you women could kind of dress this thing up a little.' We took the baby, and asked him where on earth he got it. He said that he went down to the river to take up his lines, and he saw this baby floating by on a piece of the wreck of some boat, he guessed—it looked like that. The minute Mr. Jenkins saw it, and heard what the man said, he declared that he must have that baby for his own; so he said to the man: 'Partner, I guess you don't care nothin' for that youngster.' The fisherman saw how anxious Mr. Jenkins was to get that baby, so he kind of let on that he wanted it himself. He said: 'I 'low I can take it home and make a right

smart man out of it.' But he was only fooling, I know, for he did n't seem as if he cared. So, after we talked about it, and I and the other woman told him that the baby would die unless it got some warm clothes and something to eat right away, and he lived so far away, that he had better let us have it. He said if we would give him the chain which was around the baby's neck that we could keep the baby; that he did n't care anything for it. Mr. Jenkins said: 'No, I will pay you for the chain and all; I want it just as you found him; I want it all.' So the man asked him what he would give for the chain and the locket. Mr. Jenkins said: 'What will you take?' Then the fisherman looked at it awhile and said he guessed it was brass, anyway, and he allowed he would take five dollars for it. Quicker than you could say the word Mr. Jenkins pulled out his leather pocket-book and gave him the five dollars, and then bought a great mess of fish of him besides; and the man went away, and we took the baby. And before we left there we fitted some clothes, and made it comfortable, and it went to sleep. Then we hitched up our teams and started on our way."

Mrs. Jenkins stopped. They waited for her to continue the story, but she seemed to have told all that she knew. Finally Mr. Carl said:

"And is that all, Mrs. Jenkins?"

She said: "I thought you knew the rest; the locket I gave you the other day. I don't know where Theodore is, do you? I would like it if you would tell me."

"Yes," said Mr. Carl, "we know where he is; he is in the army."

Again she lifted her face, pale with fright, and exclaimed:

"In the army—to be killed!" She wrung her hands in silent grief for a moment, and said:

"O, I hoped when Mr. Jenkins was dead that he would come back. O, I loved him so!"

"He may come back," said Mr. Carl. "Everybody who goes into the army does not get killed. My boy is with him; I expect him to come back."

"And will he come and stay with me?" she said, earnestly.

"I can't tell," Mr. Carl said. "We will write to him and tell him all the particulars; then he can do as he pleases."

"Did you never tell him," asked Miss Laura, "how you happened to get him? You did tell him he was not your child, did you not, after he got big enough to understand?"

"Yes, we told him that he was not our child; but Mr. Jenkins would not let me tell him anything about where he came from, or who he was, or how he got him."

“Did Mr. Jenkins like him as you seem to?” Mr. Carl asked.

Mrs. Jenkins shook her head sadly, and continued: “No; as soon as the child got a little acquainted with us, he seemed to have a dislike for Mr. Jenkins, although my husband did everything he could, for a long time, to make the child like him. He had set his heart on having a boy like the other man’s boy, that would be glad to go with him every place, was always climbing up on his lap when he came back after being away, and hanging around him and making sport with him; so that when the baby would not have anything to do with him, and was always clinging about my neck and coming to me when he wanted anything, my husband, for a time, was sorry, and afterward got angry; and the longer Theodore lived with us the more he seemed to hate him. That is, my husband disliked him; though, when Theodore got to be a bigger boy, he always did whatever Mr. Jenkins told him to do, and made it just as pleasant as he could; but there seemed to be a kind of a hate because the boy had not liked him when he was little; and because he was disappointed with him he would not let him go away, but he set him to tasks that were hard. Just because he did not like him, he made him read—made him read everything we had in the

house. We never had many papers, but Mr. Jenkins always had a lot of books, and he would make the boy read them aloud to him, and make him talk with him about them. But I know—O I am sure,” said Mrs. Jenkins earnestly—“that Theodore loves me! Of course, toward the last, I did not dare to let my husband see how much I thought of him. It would only have made him treat the boy worse. But I wish he would come back!”

“Mrs. Jenkins, there is one question I would like to ask you,” said Miss Laura. “Did you ever know a lady by the name of Jacobus?”

As these words were uttered, Mrs. Jenkins gave a little scream, and sank back in her chair as if she had fainted. Miss Laura sprang to her assistance, and, putting one arm around her, took one of her hands in hers, and said gently:

“Do not be alarmed, Mrs. Jenkins. Tell us whatever you know. If you want us to, we will keep your secret, if you have one.”

“I ought not to!” she said; “I ought not to! I never have; and yet it must be told or I will die!”

Miss Laura took the chair that Mr. Carl had brought to her, and, sitting down at Mrs. Jenkins’s side, held her hands and pillowed her head on her own shoulder, while Mrs. Jenkins said:

"Mrs. Jacobus and her husband were the man and woman that were in the other wagon."

"And did they know of your finding this baby?"

"Yes, yes!" she said.

"And did they go with you on out West?" asked Mr. Carl.

"For awhile we were together; but they left us."

"And you have not seen them since?" asked Miss Laura.

"No, no; I did n't know they were anywhere near, nor did Mr. Jenkins. Have they been close to us?"

"Yes," Mr. Carl said. "They have lived several years in the same town we live in, about twenty-five miles from here."

"And we did n't know it," said Mrs. Jenkins. After a few moments' pause she said: "Well, it can not be any worse than it is, and I am sure I shall feel better if I can tell you."

"Let us indeed be your friends, Mrs. Jenkins," Mr. Carl said. "I know you must be lonely. Your life must have been saddened, and if you can trust us, let us know all, and we will help you."

"There is not much to tell," she said, sadly—"not much—but it has been a heavy load for me for years. Mr. Jacobus and his wife and

their little boy were our best friends. Mr. Jenkins loved their little boy as he would love his own, and he thought that he could raise Theodore to love him as Mr. Jacobus's little boy loved him. Even while we were traveling westward, it was hard to tell sometimes which little Theodore loved most, his own papa or Mr. Jenkins, for he would go to one as quickly as to the other."

"What!" said Miss Laura. "What was his name?"

"Theodore," said Mrs. Jenkins. "Theodore Jacobus."

"And that is why you called your little boy Theodore?"

"That is what Mr. Jenkins wanted him called; and as he didn't want him called by our name, for he was not our little boy, he told him, after he had got old enough to remember, that his other name was Tompkins. That was just made up; we didn't know his real name."

"Well, go on," said Mr. Carl. "What about Mrs. Jacobus?"

"O, sir," Mrs. Jenkins said, "it is bad enough. Do you know Mrs. Jacobus? Have you seen her, and is she yet alive?"

"Yes," Mr. Carl said, "she is alive. We know her. She has a nice boy of her own. He is in the army too, with my son and with Theodore."

After a few minutes' silence, Mrs. Jenkins said:

"My husband was a very hot-headed man. He was easily angered, and when he was angry he acted like one crazed, and scarcely knew what he was doing for the moment. One day he and Mr. Jacobus got into a quarrel about something—some little thing, I don't know what—but it all passed away, and we thought that they were as good friends as ever; but after that, whenever Mr. Jacobus would do anything Mr. Jenkins did n't like, he would quarrel with him about it. The poor man and his wife would have left us, but they could not. It was our team they were driving and our wagon, and they had to go with us. We were out on the plains, just us five, one evening while we were getting supper. Mr. Jacobus and his boy were at their wagon. My husband had been off seeing about something, when he came back, and, taking up his gun, said that he would go off on the plains—perhaps he could find some game. As he started away, Mr. Jacobus said something to him which I did n't hear, and my husband replied in a low tone, but in such a way that I knew he was very angry. He started off rapidly, his gun on his shoulder, and had gone only a little distance, when he turned about and said, in a loud voice: 'Jacobus, this thing must

be stopped right here. If you ever speak to me again about anything, I will let daylight through you as sure as you live!' Mr. Jacobus stepped out from behind his wagon, and said—not angrily, but with determination: 'Mr. Jenkins, I am in your power now, but I will not always be.' Instantly my husband brought his gun to his shoulder and took deliberate aim at Mr. Jacobus, and the next instant fired. I jumped to my feet, and Mrs. Jacobus, who was near me at the fire, ran toward the wagon, where her husband was, and I after her, both of us too badly frightened to scream, expecting, both of us, to find Mr. Jacobus lying dead; but, O my! he was standing like a statue, gazing upon the face of his boy, who lay stretched upon the ground at his feet! The bullet aimed at his father had gone through the child's head; for he had come out from behind the wagon just as the shot was fired. The aim was not a true one. I really believe my husband did not intend to kill Mr. Jacobus, but aimed low that he might simply wound him. As soon as he saw what he had done, he flung his gun from him, and came back and kneeled by the little boy that he loved so much, and groaned in despair."

Mrs. Jenkins was completely overcome with emotion, and sobbed like a child. When she grew calmer, she continued:

“We took the boy, and made, as best we could, a kind of coffin, and all of us went out that night and dug a grave on the plains and buried him. We knew we could not take him with us. We could not go back to our old homes with him, so we buried him there. My husband and I went to bed that night in our wagon as usual. I did not sleep. I don't know whether he did or not. I felt that it would only be right if Mr. Jacobus should come in the night and take the life of the slayer of his son; but he did not. When daylight came we got up, and began to make preparations for breakfast, though surely none of us could eat. Mrs. Jacobus and her husband did not come out of their wagon; so, after awhile, because Mr. Jenkins would not, I went and looked into their wagon; but they were not there. I have never seen them since. I don't know where they are. I only know that in the night they went away. That morning, before we started on our journey, which now was to be an aimless one, as we scarcely knew which way to go, we went to the little grave, that we might kneel by its side and again weep over the child. When we arrived there, we found that some one had been there before us. We supposed it was Mr. Jacobus; for the body was not there. It had been taken up. After that we journeyed westward, taking

our baby with us. But Mr. Jenkins was a changed man. He was not better, but worse than he had ever been at times."

"I am sure," said Mr. Carl, "you have suffered enough during all these years to punish you for any wrong-doing—even if there had been wrong-doing—but I can not see that you are to blame."

"O, sir," said Mrs. Jenkins, "do you think that they will do anything with me for it?"

"For what, my dear woman?" he asked.

"For keeping this boy, or because I did not tell about the other."

"Let your mind be at rest on these things," said Mr. Carl. "There is nobody to do anything with you, even if there was anything to be done; but there is not. You deserve credit for what you have done rather than blame. You have cared for this boy; you have saved his life for some good purpose, doubtless—a purpose which we can not now see."

Mrs. Jenkins was soothed by Mr. Carl's words; but she still dreaded the thought of meeting Mr. Jacobus.

"Do you suppose he will come to see me?" she asked at last.

"No; he is dead; was killed in the army. And Mrs. Jacobus, poor woman! would not know you if she should see you. She does not

remember anything except that she had a little boy that she loved dearly, and who was the joy of her life. She remembers that; but everything else seems to have gone from her memory."

Mrs. Jenkins sighed heavily, and said: "Poor woman! I have thought of her all these years, and have wished that I could see her; and yet that could not be while *he* lived."

After promising to visit her again some time, Mr. Carl and Miss Laura started upon their return journey, glad that they had so many facts in their possession with reference to Theodore's past, and yet sorry that all that Mrs. Jenkins knew fell far short of what they desired to know. They could only guess that they had been lost in some river disaster; but the particulars were unknown to them.

When they reached home, Miss Laura, to see what effect her words would have upon Mrs. Jacobus, said gently:

"That was a pretty boy, your Theodore."

At once her face brightened, and she said:

"O yes; but did you know him?"

"No; but I have seen one who does. Do you remember a Mrs. Jenkins?"

"Jenkins?" said Mrs. Jacobus, thoughtfully; "Jenkins?" and, after a long pause, she shook her head and said: "I can't remember."

Before Miss Laura left for home, she came down-stairs and said to Mr. Carl:

"Now, we must write the boys what we know at once. It surely will be sad news to Theodore, and perhaps to Babbitt and Jakey; for they have up to this time supposed that we were on the right road to discover Theodore's parents, and here we stop. We know where Mr. Jenkins got him, and we can not tell more than that."

"It *is* sad," said Mr. Carl; "but we will write. Suppose," he said, "you write to Theodore himself. I dare say the poor boy never had a letter in his life, and it would be a real pleasure for him to get one from some one, and especially from you, since you are as much interested in this matter as I am myself."

Before the close of the next day the letters had been written and compared, and mailed to Babbitt and Theodore.



Chapter XVI.

A SUNDAY SURPRISE.

UP to this time there had been no effort on the part of the chaplain to hold any religious services. He had been busy, however, in attending to the mail for the regiment, and in visiting and consoling, either in their tents or in the hospital, such as were sick. However, he felt that they might with profit have some kind of a religious service; so, going through the companies, he told them that that afternoon he would be under a tree, which he pointed out, to meet such as cared to take part in a religious service of some kind—he did not know just what.

At the appointed time some fifteen or twenty men had assembled. Among them were the Little Corporal's mess—Babbitt, George, and Jakey—gladly going, as it would be to them a reminder of some of their home experiences. Theodore went, not because he wanted to go, or had any interest in a gathering of that kind, but

because the rest of the mess were going, and he did not care to be separated from them even for an hour.

There was no scarcity of Bibles or Testaments; for all who had gone had taken with them their Testaments, which they had been careful to bring from their homes.

The services consisted in the reading of the Scripture responsively, the chaplain reading one verse and the men another, and a prayer by the chaplain, and then the reading of another chapter, with questions asked on each verse after it had been read.

They had just about concluded this exercise when Colonel Smith was seen coming toward them. He did not at once join the little group that was seated upon the grass under the tree, but came near and leaned against a tree, so that he could be within hearing distance, and yet not be actually a member of the little company. As the chaplain was about to dismiss them, Colonel Smith came forward and said:

"I am glad, Chaplain, that you have concluded to hold such services as this, and I think that I will see to it that hereafter there will be better attendance; for I am sure it can not fail to have a good effect on the men to have you deliver an address each Sabbath, or at such times as you may feel it to be best."

For some time Theodore had been wondering if the little mess to which he belonged were different from the others, in that they had such reverence for God and such faith in his Word. He was not quite prepared to find the colonel, who had so quickly become his beau ideal of a man, taking the stand which he did. He could not help wondering if the colonel knew just what he believed—or did not believe, rather—he would be as kind to him as he had been, or whether that would make any difference.

When the Sabbath-school had been dismissed, and the men began to disperse, Colonel Smith came up to Theodore, and said:

“Theodore, suppose you go with me to my tent;” and he led the way, and Theodore followed to his tent. As a matter of fact, Colonel Smith had no object in view except to show a friendliness to the young man that he insisted had saved his life; and he did not know how he could more clearly demonstrate his desire to be a friend to him than by making him, as far as possible, a companion at such times and under such circumstances as would not in any way affect his authority.

“I thought,” the colonel said, as he went into his tent, and placed a camp-stool for Theodore to sit upon, “that you would like to look at some pictures that I prize very much.”

He then took from his camp-chest a lot of old-time miniatures—not photographs, but what were known as ambrotypes.

“This,” he said, handing him one, “is the picture of my father. I got it from an aunt not very long ago, and I prize it more than I can tell.”

Theodore took it in his hand, and gazed long and silently at the picture before him. Under any circumstances he would have declared that the colonel’s father was a handsome man; but as his heart was burning with the thought that, in all probability, he was looking upon the face of his own father, he declared, with an emphasis that startled the colonel:

“I never saw a handsomer man!” and again fell to devouring the face with his eyes. Presently he looked up, and the colonel stood before him, deeply interested in Theodore’s manner, holding in his hand another miniature, which he passed over to Theodore, taking the one he had, and said:

“That is a picture of my mother. I got that from my aunt, too.”

If Theodore’s heart before was almost bursting, he now felt his emotion quite carrying him away; and as he looked at the picture it faded from his view, hidden by the blinding tears which he in vain strove to repress. The colonel

could not guess his thoughts. Knowing that he was an orphan, and that he did not know anything of his parents, he naturally supposed that the emotion he displayed was due entirely to a consciousness of his utter loneliness, and out of sympathy for him possibly. Reaching out for the picture which Theodore still clung to, as though loath to give it up, the colonel said:

"Here is one that I look at as often as I look at the pictures of my parents; and sometimes I am almost persuaded to say that I would rather see this one than to see them. He was such a darling; and we all loved him so!" And he passed him a picture of a baby, yet in long clothes, apparently leaning against the bosom of some lady; for Theodore thought he could see at one side of the picture the outline of a portion of a lady's arm, as though it might be around the child.

"And that," said the colonel, as Theodore looked upon the picture calmly, "is my baby brother that was drowned in the Missouri—or is somewhere, I don't know where."

Theodore knew better. He knew that that was his picture, or, at least, he thought he did; and, in spite of himself, he smiled as he looked upon the portrait and tried to imagine that he ever looked like that. The colonel was sur-

prised that he should show less interest in this than in the picture of his parents; for Theodore's manner changed, and, instead of being so saddened, was bright and even animated. His eyes gleamed with a pleasure that was quite new to them, so far as the colonel had been able to detect.

"Do you not think that is a pretty baby?" said the colonel. "That was taken a year or more before the accident. He got handsomer all the time."

Theodore said: "Yes, that is a pretty baby; but I would rather look at the other pictures than this."

"Why is that?" said the colonel.

"Well," said Theodore, "babies' pictures do not mean much. They all look alike to me. But these other pictures mean something." And then, with a sudden change from his manner of light-hearted indifference to one of intense interest and soberness, he said: "I would like to look at that lady's picture always."

The colonel could not understand; so scarcely knowing that he did so, he reached back to the table on which he had placed his mother's picture, and handed it again to Theodore. He grasped it eagerly, and, holding it in both hands, shading it so that the light would not prevent his seeing distinctly the features before him, he

sat as one in a trance, excepting that his body trembled under suppressed emotion, and that his breath came hard and quick.

"I wish that you could have known her," said the colonel. "I am glad that you like to look at that picture. I am always glad when anybody likes my mother's picture."

"I wish I could have known her," said Theodore; and then, wondering if he dared to say so, and yet yielding to the impulse of the moment, he said: "That is the kind of a lady that I have always imagined my mother to be." And then, as if that was not quite true, for he really had not thought of such a thing in just that way, he said: "I mean I would not be disappointed if that should be the picture of my own mother!"

"Well, here is another," said the colonel, giving no especial heed to these words of the young soldier. "This is a picture taken lately, since the war commenced—a photograph of my sister."

"O yes," said Theodore; "I would know that anywhere. You remember, I saw her at Mattoon, when we were in camp there; but I did not know her then."

"How was that?" said the colonel, turning a quick glance upon Theodore.

"Why, I mean—" He did not dare to say

what he meant; so he thought a moment, and changed his words, saying: "Well, you know, then—" Again he hesitated, as in doubt whether he should betray himself or not. Finally he stammered: "I mean I did not know you so well, Colonel, as I do now."

"O, that is it?" said the colonel, smiling. "Well, I hope, my friend, that we shall know each other better than we know each other now." And then, gathering the pictures up and slipping them into his camp-chest, the colonel said: "I do not speak of it boastingly, and I hope you will understand clearly why I tell you, but when we get home, Theodore, unless you have some other place you would rather go, I believe, if you are the kind of a young man I think you are, I would like to have you go into my store."

"I am sure I should be glad to do that," said Theodore; "but I know nothing about a store."

"Well, you can learn," said the colonel; "and I shall try and be very patient with you and teach you; and perhaps," he said, as though he felt it was time for him to express fully his esteem of the services rendered him by the young man—"my sister and I live at our own home—and perhaps you would like to make your home with us? If I do say it myself, our home

is a lovely place; for I do not mind telling you what everybody does not know,—when that terrible accident happened, my father was considered a wealthy man, and his wealth consisted principally, except what he had invested in his business, in real estate, and that real estate has not gone down in value any since that time. You may form your own conclusions from what I tell you. Think of this, Theodore; and if we all live to get home—and I hope we will—remember, you can have a place with me in business and in my home.”

“Perhaps,” said Theodore, “if you knew all about me that I know, you would not want me to be with you—perhaps you would not have me about your place.”

The colonel was somewhat confused at this, but said:

“I do not know to what you refer. I hope it is nothing serious; for I have been thinking about the pleasure it should give me to see you well started upon the high road to success. However, we’ll see! we’ll see!”

“It is very kind of you,” said Theodore, “and I feel that I do not deserve any of the things that you propose to do for me. You will find me, perhaps, very dull. I never had any schooling except what I got at home.”

“Never mind that,” said the colonel. “You

are young yet, and there is abundant time for you to go to school. I hope that you desire an education. That is the main thing, after all." After a few more words with reference to the probabilities of the future, the colonel said that Theodore might return to his quarters.

When he had crawled into the tent, he found the other boys all engaged at one work or another—writing letters home or reading from their Testaments. He had no one to write to and had no Testament to read, and no inclination to read if he had had it. But as he lay stretched out under the tent, his hands clasped under his head, his eyes closed as if asleep, he dreamed; but this dream was not that of sleep, but of a mind quickened by what he had heard and seen that afternoon; and his dream was of a time when all the proof which he thought needed could be furnished to show that he was really the little boy who was found in the water, and was, indeed, the colonel's brother. As he thought over this matter, he concluded that he would insist that no one of the mess should make known his identity until it was his pleasure to do so, as he hoped to be able to win a place in the mind and heart of the colonel more than he already possessed before it should be proven to him that Theodore was his brother.

That afternoon, after Theodore had returned

to his tent, the colonel turned to his writing-desk and wrote a long letter to his sister, in which he told her of his plans. She had before been made acquainted with the brave act of the young soldier, and had had her heart moved in sympathy for him as she learned of his orphan life, and the colonel felt certain that what he was about to propose would be heartily approved by her. The letter concluded with these words:

“We may never be able to find our baby brother, my sister; but it is certain that in this young man we have some mother’s darling child, and in doing for him what I propose, we are doing only what we could wish should be done for our brother if, by any chance, he should now be alive and in need of assistance from any one. It will be proper, perhaps, for us to acquaint ourselves fully with what of the history of this young man is known, and, as soon as I can, I will hunt up the company records, and find where he hails from and who his acquaintances are at home. And when I have done this, I wish you would take the information and find out all you can about his antecedents and his associations before he entered the army.”



Chapter XVII.

A BROKEN CHAIN.

THE regiment removed to Helena, Arkansas, from Memphis, Tennessee, and there Babbitt was detailed as corporal of the guard in the hospital which had been established in a deserted residence. While there, he found, among some old papers swept into an unused room by the hospital servants, a letter, which he kept to show to Theodore when he should be ordered back to camp. Such an order came after a few days, and he found himself with his mess again. He gave Theodore the letter.

"You read it," Theodore said, handing it back.

"Just as you like," said Babbitt; though he was glad that Theodore had made such a suggestion, as in that way the rest of the mess would become acquainted with the contents of the letter as soon as Theodore; and it was certainly one of as much interest to them, in some respects, as to him.

The letter was dated at Memphis, Tennessee,

1847. It was addressed to the Hon. S. Sebastian on the outside of the folded paper. Inside, after the date, were the words, "My dear uncle." It was signed simply, "Your affectionate niece, Clara."

The letter itself was after the style of old-time epistles from friend to friend. It was long, and abounded in minute details—a peculiarity which was the charm of letters of that day, when people did not write often, but when they did write, left nothing untold that would in the least degree interest their correspondents. The whole of the letter need not be given, but that portion of it which first attracted Babbitt's attention, and which he thought would be so interesting to Theodore, was as follows:

"Now, my dear uncle, I must tell you about that awful night. Of course you have heard before this that I was in the wreck of the *Saxon*, on the Missouri River, and you must have seen in the papers that I am one of the saved. I can not tell you how grateful I am to a kind Providence for mercifully sparing my life. I am glad I was the only one of our family aboard the boat, though sister Emma intended to go with me up to the very last hour before starting. One of my saddest recollections is connected with a family whom I met for the first time on that trip. The gentleman was a prominent

business man from Ohio. His wife was a lady of the utmost refinement and culture. You can readily believe this, when I tell you that her ancestors are all of the South, and that she herself is a native of our dear Southland.

“They had with them a son and a daughter and a baby boy. There was no other child aboard the boat—at least I saw no other—and this baby was the center of attraction for all the men and ladies around. The gentleman’s name was Smith. I can not now recall the names of the children, for really I did not pay much heed to them. But that is not what I was going to tell you; and I am afraid that I shall not be able to tell you in this letter all of the terrible things of that night; but after the boat blew up, and I was rescued, I learned that this entire family were lost. You can imagine how deep was my distress; for, in that short time we had been together on the boat, I had become strongly attached to Mr. Smith and his wife.

“There were a number of people rescued by the same boat that picked me up. Some of them I had met, but most of them were strangers to me. I was so shocked by the accident that I kept to my state-room all the time until we reached St. Louis. By that time I felt much improved, and was out on deck as some of the rescued people were being landed; for I did

not intend to stop there, you know, but was coming on down home by the next steamer.

"I found, by inquiry among the passengers, that the family of which I spoke had not all been drowned, but that the children had been saved, and had been met at the wharf by friends of Mr. Smith, who lived in St. Louis. But what seemed so sad to me is that both their father and mother should have perished, and that the children should have been saved. If I had had the arranging of the fates I would have let the children go to the bottom, or straight to heaven, whichever you please, and would have saved the father and mother. Now that little baby must be tossed about, perhaps, or at least go uncared for by either parent. And yet I am glad, for I can now see his sweet face. I wish I could have seen him once before they landed at St. Louis; I should like to have kissed him for his mother. It is a fortunate thing, however, that he fell into the hands of his father's friends in St. Louis.

"But I know you do not care for me to write so much about other people and nothing about myself; so I will now give you, as far as I can, an account of my own experiences from the time I found myself in the water until I was rescued."

And then followed a detailed and graphic account of what she had suffered and seen and heard that night.

When Babbitt had finished reading the letter he flung it down on his bunk, with a happy face turned toward Theodore, and said:

"And that completes the chain."

To his surprise Theodore manifested no interest; but if any concern could be noted, it was that of disappointment.

"So it does," he said; "but to me that is the saddest letter that could possibly come."

"Well, why so?" said Babbitt, anxiously. "It tells you just as plain as day that you are the brother of the colonel; and, if I were you, I would go to him right away with this letter."

"Certainly," said George, "I think that is the best thing to do."

"But hold on a moment," said Theodore; "do you not see that this letter proves just the reverse of what you say? It tells distinctly that Mr. Smith's children were all rescued and brought to St. Louis; and, if they had been, how would it be possible for me to be the lost child?"

"Yes; but don't you see," said Babbitt, quickly, "that there must be some mistake, for the colonel himself says that his baby brother was never heard of after that night."

"I know he said that; but probably there was more than one boat passing down the Missouri the next day, and the boat that picked

up this lady picked up the baby; so, even if they didn't get together, they were saved."

While they were discussing this matter the chaplain came, and, as usual, brought the mail; and in that mail were Mr. Carl's and Miss Laura's letters. They were hastily read; and then they all agreed that Theodore's fears were not without ground, for they understood clearly that he had been rescued from the river by some person in Missouri, who had given him or sold him to Mr. Jenkins.

"But," said Babbitt, brightening, "this lady says there was no other baby on board, and that must be you."

"It can not be!" said Theodore; "it can not be!" And then, with an effort as though he would have it otherwise, he said: "It may have been that I was among the poorer class of passengers, down below in the steerage." After thinking a moment, he said: "At any rate, I will give this letter to the colonel. It can not mean me, and it may give him some clew by which he can find his brother at last."

"That would be very good," suggested George, "if there was any name; but that is simply the given name, and he could not find in Memphis any one answering to the name of Clara who was aboard that boat at that time."

"Slighter clews than that," said Theodore,

"have been used to the unraveling of great mysteries. Any way, this letter belongs to the colonel; and as far as I am concerned," he said resolutely, "all I have thought about it or hoped about it shall be put away forever. Of one thing I am certain, I am not his brother."

With a saddening countenance, he turned over and buried his face in his hands. The rest of the mess had nothing to say, but were silently meditating, until finally Theodore said:

"Babbitt, if you want to do me a kindness, I hope you will take that letter now to the colonel."

"I would rather not," said Babbitt.

"I wish you would," said Theodore, earnestly; "I wish you would. It can make no difference to me, and it may be a very great treasure to him."

Knowing that remonstrance would be in vain, and pitying Theodore in his distress, Babbitt at once crawled from under the tent and made his way to head-quarters, where he left the letter in the colonel's keeping. When he returned to the tent, they re-read the letters which they had just received from home.

Under any other circumstances Miss Laura's letter to Theodore would have awakened most grateful feelings; but having had the letter which Babbitt brought from the hospital be-

fore the other came, he was too much disappointed to appreciate fully the contents of Miss Laura's.

"I wish now," said Babbitt, "I had n't found that letter; for if we did not have that, we would feel certain that there was no break in the chain which unites Theodore with the colonel; for you know the colonel says that his little brother was found by some one, but that neither he nor his father's friends could ever discover his whereabouts; and he said that his brother, on the night of the accident, had his mother's locket on. Mrs. Jenkins says that Theodore was found in the river, and that when they got him he had a locket. Now, it seems to me that that is evidence enough that Theodore is the colonel's brother, and all that he needs to do is to go to Colonel Smith with these letters, and he will not only recognize him, but will be overjoyed to find that his brother is right in the camp with him."

"Or," said George, speaking earnestly, as though he had just thought of it, "if Mr. Carl should send that locket down here, Colonel Smith could very easily tell whether it was the one his brother had worn."

"And if it was," said Jakey, "no one could dispute that they are brothers."

Theodore had listened attentively, but he

gave heed to his fears rather than his hopes; so he said:

"That all might be true, and yet I could not make myself feel that that was evidence enough; and then here is this letter from a lady who was on that boat, who knew Colonel Smith's father and mother, and who knew him, and yet she says that all the children were found; so that leaves me out."

"Well, where did you come from?" asked Jakey.

Theodore was obliged to smile at this way of putting the matter, and said: "I can not tell."

"Well, let us go to the colonel with all the facts we have," said George, "tell him our story, and may be he can help us."

"What's that?" said Theodore, raising himself up. "Go to him! Have n't you all promised me that you will not mention the matter to him until I feel that it is best? He has already told me that he is glad that I did something for him, and now, if I go to him with this story, he will feel that I am trying to impose upon him. I will not do it, and you must not," he said, lying down again; for his head was throbbing with pain and his leg was troubling him exceedingly.

"At any rate," said Babbitt, "we might in-

quire, when we can, some time, whether he remembers anything about this lady, and if she was on the same boat that picked him up."

"That's it!" said Theodore, excitedly; "that's it! But, don't you see, he was on some other boat—I know he must have been—and his baby brother was picked up by the boat that this lady was on."

"But how is it, then," suggested George, "that she says they were all taken care of by his father's friends at St. Louis?"

"I don't know about that," said Theodore; "I can't tell; but one thing I do know, and that is, I am not going to set up a claim to being a brother of Colonel Smith's, and the more so since he has told me that his father was wealthy. No, I will not do that; I would rather beg!"

"Which you will not have to do," said Babbitt, "brother or no brother. You have done so much for him, and he thinks so much of you already, that you will never lack for a home."

"Well," said Theodore finally, "I wish I had never seen that letter this afternoon. That just makes me feel that, perhaps, my parents were poor people. I am not ashamed of that that I know of, but I wish it was some other way."

And so did they all wish it was some other

way. They had thought that they were surely grasping the right lines to lead them to a discovery of Theodore's parents, and were sorry that Babbitt's letter, which he found at the hospital, instead of strengthening the chain had really broken it.



Chapter XVIII.

SEPARATED.

THEODORE had a natural aversion, as did all the soldiers, to going to the hospital as long as he could stay out of it; but after tossing restlessly all the day and the succeeding night, worrying the meanwhile over the letters which had come to him, he felt that he was too sick to remain longer in the camp with his comrades, if he had any expectation of living at all.

Having heard Babbitt tell of the accommodations at the hospital in the town, he dreaded the idea of being taken there; but that he was in need of nursing, in need of medicine, became more and more apparent as the hours slipped by.

He was surprised by a visit from the colonel one afternoon, a short time after the events of the last chapter occurred, and the colonel was equally surprised at Theodore's condition.

He made him strip his leg, so he could examine the wound for himself, and he said:

"You must go to the hospital at once. That wound is really becoming dangerous, and I tell you plainly that you may see the necessity for prompt action. It may be that we can save your life only by taking off your leg. I hope that will not have to be done."

Theodore was thoroughly frightened by these words, and quickly made up his mind to submit to any treatment in any place if he might escape the loss of his leg.

"Besides that," said the colonel, looking on Theodore's flushed face and parched lips and dull eyes, "you are threatened with a severe fever—a malarial attack. I feel a little that way myself," he said. "Indeed, I believe that this is about the worst piece of country I ever saw. I can tell by looking in the faces of the men that they are nearly all sick. I will see what I can do for you, Theodore. Of course I can offer you no accommodations other than those of the hospital down in the town; but if you go there—and you must—I will see that you are provided for as well as our facilities will allow."

After this he returned to his head-quarters. The other boys were devoting their time between sympathy for Theodore in his affliction

and regrets at the necessity of his being taken from them. While they were talking, Babbitt looked out of the tent down the river, and saw a boat coming up that was different from anything he had seen. It had been a regular Mississippi steamer, he judged; but the promenade about the cabin-deck had been boxed up, as also had been the space around the engines and boilers on the lower deck, which was usually, on river steamers of that kind, reserved for freight. As he was wondering what such a queer-looking craft could be, he discovered floating from the flag-staff not only the Stars and Stripes, but a white flag, and then he remembered that that was a token that the boat was devoted to the use of the sick, and so it was.

The boat which he had descried was the *D. A. January*, a fine river steamer, which had been converted into a floating hospital, and which visited all the points along the river, picking up such cases as needed better attention than could be given in the field hospitals, and taking them north. As he watched it, the boat slowly edged up to the wharf and stopped. He did not know, of course, any of the particulars concerning this boat, nor did he guess what its errand was there.

By and by, however, there drove into the camp three or four ambulances. The surgeons

of the regiment, accompanied by the hospital steward of the regiment, went through the camp making inquiries as to the sick. In their progress they came to the tent of the Little Corporal's mess, and said:

"The hospital boat is at the wharf, and instructions have been given that if there are any very sick in the regiment, to have them taken on board that boat, as the hospital here is a very poor affair, and is full anyway."

"There is a very sick lad here," said George "that ought to go."

As he said this, Theodore reached out and took hold of his sleeve, and gave it a little jerk, which he understood meant for him to be still.

"Who is that?" said one of the surgeons, stooping down and looking into the tent.

"Why, Theodore, over here."

"What is the matter, my man?" said the surgeon.

"Nothing, sir," said Theodore; "just a little hurt on my leg, that's all."

The surgeon and the steward did not tarry, but passed on. While they were visiting another company, Colonel Smith came down to the tent, and said:

"Theodore, get ready. I shall have you go north on that boat. It is the only way that your life can be saved. If you stay here I am certain

that you will lose your life; and if you don't, you may lose your leg. The boat will tarry only a little while. Boys, you help him get ready," he said to the others; and then he hastened back to his tent, as he had important duties to perform there.

By and by the surgeon and the steward came again to the tent, peeped in, and, without a word to any one, walked away. They had been gone only a few minutes before an ambulance drove up and stopped, and a man jumped out, saying:

"Who is it here that wants to go to the boat?"

The boys had hastily packed Theodore's knapsack, had given to him his haversack and canteen, and said: "We suppose you will not need your gun or cartridge-box, nor your other accouterments; so leave them here." With difficulty they assisted him into the ambulance.

"Can't you go with me?" he said to Babbitt, pleadingly.

"No," said Babbitt; "I am sure I can not."

"Please just go to the river! Get in. No one will know any better. You can come back."

There was no time for parleying; so Babbitt yielded to Theodore's entreaties, and climbed into the ambulance with him. The driver had

taken his seat, and, as there were only a few minutes to spare, drove rapidly to the levee. They did not know that ambulances had visited every other camp, and that they had brought down scores of sick to the river's edge to be taken on the boat. Besides the sick that had been brought to the levee by the ambulance, there were gathered along the banks of the river a hundred or more men, who looked with longing eyes upon the boat which was northward-bound, every one of whom would have been willing to sacrifice almost anything he possessed if he might be permitted to board that boat and start home. It mattered to them but little which way the boat went, or at what place it might land, so that it was northward and in their home-land.

Theodore himself, as he drew near to the river, caught the desire of the others, and felt that it would be better to be on that steamer going northward away from that country than to remain in camp. He felt then the full force of the fears which had crowded his mind for several days—the fear that he would not live to get away from there.

Babbitt assisted him out of the ambulance, placed his knapsack for a seat upon the levee, and helped him sit down.

“O, I am sure it is best for you, Theodore. I am sure that, with good care, you will get

well. But I have felt that if you stay here, and your wound is so bad, that, as the colonel says, you may die, and I don't want you to die yet."

"No," said Theodore earnestly, "nor do I want to die. There are some things I want to see to first."

"Yes," said Babbitt earnestly, "you want to find—"

"Yes," said Theodore, anticipating him, "I want to find my mother; or, if not that, somebody that I am kin to. O, Babbitt," he said, looking up into his face with earnestness and a depth of feeling which he had never shown before, while his eyes were moist with tears,—“O, Babbitt, you do not know how lonely I am!”

"No," said Babbitt, sympathetically, "I do not. I can not understand what it is not to have any father, any mother; not to know whence you came, not to know where you are going, not to know anything about your future. I have always had a home. I know that if I were sick as you are, and hurt as you are, that I need but write to my father, and he would spare no effort and no money to get me into his own house; and then," said Babbitt, while his eyes danced in pleasure at the thought, "and then I know what my mother would do! I am sure that I could never be so sick that she could not cure me."

For a moment Theodore did not reply. He could not. He did not wish to show the feeling that possessed him. He did not want, there, in that public place, to give way to his emotions, so he choked them all back.

"Where does this boat go?" said Babbitt to a soldier, who seemed to have come off the boat; for he did not look like the rest, and was walking up and down the levee.

"We are bound for Jefferson Barracks, a few miles below St. Louis. There are fine hospitals there. We make regular trips up and down the river to take the sick to those hospitals."

"And is it a nice place?" he asked.

"Nice," said the soldier. "It is not nice to be sick, of course, nor to have wounds; but if there is any good place for sick people to be, and be well cared for and watched like babes at home, that is the hospital at Jefferson Barracks. Why," he said, growing enthusiastic, "there is somebody watching you from one day's end to the other. You can't turn over without a nurse rushing up to know if you want anything. You have only to say that you have an appetite to eat, and all kinds of delicacies are brought to you. That is in God's land," he said, "and those are God's people."

Theodore could not fail to catch the meaning of these words, and to see how great the

contrast of the surroundings of such a place as that and this rough camp-life; and he knew that if he had had the care that would be possible at such a place, he would have escaped a great deal of suffering he had endured on account of his hurt.

"Could our friends come to see us?" asked Babbitt.

"O yes," said the man, "if you get up there in that hospital, up in God's country, your friends can get to you."

"And how far is it from St. Louis?" asked Babbitt again, eagerly.

"Only about twenty miles; just about twenty miles from St. Louis—go down by the boat, or you can go down on the cars."

"Think of that, Theodore," said Babbitt. "Why, it is only four or five hours from our home to St. Louis. Why, father could leave home in the morning and be down to the hospital at twelve."

"Yes," said Theodore, "and I suppose if you were there, and he knew it, the first train would take him."

"So it would!" said Babbitt, earnestly; "so it would! But do you know, Theodore, that he will see you?"

"No, it can not be."

"It will. When I go back to camp-I shall

write him that you have gone there, and he will be down to see you. I know he will, for my sake; whether he wants to do so or not, he will for my sake."

"I am not so sure," said Theodore.

"No, I know you are not," said Babbitt. "You can not be sure; but I am sure. Why, he is my father; I am his son. Don't you see?"

"Yes, I see that," said Theodore.

"Well, do you think my father would refuse me anything?"

"I don't know," said Theodore, hesitatingly.

The soldier, the meantime, who had come off the boat, had passed on and was out of hearing.

"I don't say it boastingly," said Babbitt; "but it is the truth, Theodore. I have always tried to do what my father told me to do, and he knows it; and I am his only son; and if I do say it myself, I am his obedient son. And now, when I write home and ask him, for my sake, to go down and see you and do all he can for you, he will not refuse."

Babbitt was very earnest, and was himself deeply moved; for, whilst he could not find Theodore's parents, he was sure that his own father's heart was so large and so warm that it could take in his friend, and in a measure, at least, atone for the loss which he had sustained. And he pictured to himself the joy which his father

should feel when he should reach the hospital at Jefferson Barracks and visit Theodore for his own boy's sake.

"And another thing," said Babbitt, as he thought the matter over, "I would not be a bit surprised if mother would go with him; and if she does, Theodore, you can see by her what it is to have a mother."

Babbitt was forced to turn aside that his own emotion might, for a time, be hidden from his friend.

While they were thus talking, a stream of men were passing on to the boat, and going up to the comfortable bunks which were assigned to them.

"See," Babbitt said. "Come, Thee, let me help you at once. We must go; the boat will leave the first thing we know."

So, with great effort, Theodore and Babbitt walked down the levee, Babbitt carrying the knapsack and supporting Theodore at the same time. They came to the gang-plank, and watching their opportunity when there was not a great crowd around it or on it, Babbitt helped Theodore upon the plank and on to the boat. Just as they set foot on the boat an officer stepped up to them, and touching Theodore on the arm, said:

"Not so fast."

"Yes, sir," Theodore replied.

"Here, sit down," said Babbitt, dropping the knapsack and helping Theodore to be seated.

They then noticed that at the right of the entrance was a young man at a table with a great book spread out before him, while another man sat near with a lot of loose sheets of paper, on which there seemed to be written names. The officer who had stopped the boys as they were about to go on the boat, said:

"Which one of you is going North?"

"Theodore, sir," said Babbitt.

"Theodore? What is his other name?" asked the man.

"Theodore Tompkins," said Babbitt, speaking for him.

Then the officer called to the man sitting at the table, "Theodore Tompkins." When he had done so, the man turned in the book until he had come to the pages on which were written the names beginning with those initials. Commencing at the top of the page he ran his finger down, following with his eye, turning from one page to another; and then he looked up, shaking his head, saying:

"Not here, sir."

"Very well, sir," said the officer, turning to Theodore, "pick up your knapsack and get out of the way; other men are waiting."

"What is that you say, sir?" said Babbitt.

Theodore was too much overcome with despair to say anything.

"I said take your knapsack up and get out of the way. Your name is not on the list; consequently you can not go. I can take only those whose names are given us by the surgeons."

"Yes, sir," said Babbitt, gathering up the knapsack, and taking Theodore's arm, slowly turning about—both with hearts too heavy, it seemed, for them to live.

They paused a moment and looked up the levee, farther up to the great sand-hills, to the little white tents; and it seemed to Babbitt that if Theodore went back there, it was simply that he might be with them a few days more, and that finally he should witness a scene similar to the one when he sat in the hospital window when the old man died, only that the coffin that should then be carried would contain, not the corpse of a stranger—of an aged soldier—but the remains of his loved Theodore, a young soldier, a young man, ambitious and full of strong desires for life. These thoughts quickly passed through his mind, and he felt Theodore tremble as he clung to his arm. They were making what haste they could to push their way through the crowd that had again thronged the

gangway, when the clerk, who had again run over the register of names, calling to Babbitt, said:

"What did you say his name is?"

This question awakened new hope, and Babbitt quickly turned about and said:

"Theodore Tompkins, sir." And then, that he might in some way assure them: "There is surely a mistake. His name must be there. The colonel came to the tent himself and said he must go; and the surgeons came, and I saw them writing."

Again the man ran his finger down the pages, and as he came toward the close he began to shake his head, and continued to shake, and then finally lifted his face and said to Babbitt, sorrowfully:

"Indeed, his name is not here."

In the meantime, the man who had the loose sheets of paper had been running over them, and putting one under the clerk's eyes, said:

"What is that?"

He picked up the paper and looked over it closely; and then stepped to the officer who had been talking to the boys, and said:

"It is here, it is here, sir. We had skipped it in copying the names."

"Very well, very well," said the officer, who had been really sorry to turn the boys away;

"come right in. Go up that stairway. The gentleman at the head will show you your place."

That was enough. Theodore had found a place on the hospital boat. Babbitt could not tarry; but calling after him, "Good-bye; father will be there," he rushed down the gang-plank, up the levee, and hurried back to camp, reaching it just in time to call George and Jakey out, that they might see the boat grandly move up the river. And they knew that it carried with it a heart that was united to theirs by many ties.

Whether they should ever see Theodore's face again they could not tell. They felt lonely without him, and they felt sure that he must miss them. "And yet," Babbitt said, "it will only be a few days before my own mother can be by his bedside, and that means everything!"



Chapter XIX.

UP THE RIVER.

WHEN Theodore reached the head of the stairs on the steamer, he met the man who the officer in charge said would show him to his place. If he had been a prince, and all of the men around him had been his servants, he thought he could not have been treated with greater consideration, or have had every want so fully anticipated.

The interior arrangement of the hospital boat was different from that of an ordinary river steamer, in that the cabin had been converted into a hospital ward, and along both sides were placed comfortable cots. That portion of the boat which is usually devoted to the promenade around the cabin, as before said, had been boxed up, or inclosed, windows being placed along the sides, and in these rooms were ranged cots similar to those in the cabin. The same arrangement had been made on the lower

deck, so that this boat was what might be called a three-story hospital.

The first thing which attracted Theodore's attention, as he was being assisted along the aisle between the cots, which stood with their heads to the partition walls and their feet toward the aisle, was that everything was scrupulously clean. The floor had been scrubbed until it was as white as it was possible to make wood. Such of the cots as were occupied by the sick, as well as those that were awaiting occupants, were clad in the purest white, the sheets and pillow-cases, apparently, having been put on afresh that very morning.

Beside each cot was a stool, and upon one of these Theodore was assisted by the attendant, who immediately relieved him of his canteen and haversack, and hung them over the head of the cot. He stooped down and unbuckled Theodore's shoes, and gently removed them; took off his stockings, then assisted him in getting off his coat, and finally his trousers; and, with a tenderness that a mother might show an infant, he was assisted into the cot, the sheet and blanket having been turned down, the pillow shaken up and made to look comfortable, at least.

It was with a sense of great relief that Theodore stretched his lame leg on the soft bed, and

nestled his head in the softer pillow, while the attendant tenderly covered him up, saying:

“When you have rested a little, I will come to you again with some water.”

While this was being done, Theodore had heard the command of the captain of the boat as the cables were let loose; he heard the puff of the steam as the engine was started and the great wheels turned round, and he knew that he was going up the river, though he could not see from his cot through the windows.

In the ward in which he had been placed nearly every bed was occupied by a sick soldier. Some of them were very sick and very quiet. Others of them were able to sit up in bed and to talk to the attendants or to their neighbor in the next cot. He, however, preferred to remain still. He never had had any better attention. It seemed to him he never had slept in a better bed, and there never were such desirable surroundings. The heat, the dust, and the dreadful anxieties of the camp were all behind. Through the open window in the forward part of the ward came the cool wind from off the river, while through the doorway there came to him sounds of conversation which was quiet and soft and soothing, differing entirely from what his ears had been accustomed to in the camp, where there was more or less of confusion

and of rough language, and of bustle and activity. Resting quietly, he dropped off to sleep. How long he slept he could not tell; but he was awakened by some one gently shaking him by the shoulder, and when he had opened his eyes he found standing by him the attendant, a basin of water in his hand and a clean towel thrown across his shoulder. He said:

"Now, if you will let me, I will wash your face and hands."

Theodore was inclined to do this service for himself, and said:

"No; let me have the pan here, and I will attend to it."

"I can do it better," said the attendant gently, at the same time setting his pan on the stool. He reached out and unbuttoned the collar of Theodore's shirt and rolled it back, and then, with the sponge which he had brought with him, dipped into the cool water, gently bathed Theodore's face and neck, and then his hands, and dried them upon the towel.

"You would like a drink," he said.

"O ever so much!" said Theodore, who had come to the boat thirsty, longing for something that would satisfy his desire in that direction; so, nearly worn out, he had dropped to sleep, despite his thirst. When he woke up there was present the same burning thirst.

The attendant carried the basin of water and the towel away, and presently returned with a glass. Theodore heard him before he had reached his cot. He did not hear the attendant walking; for he wore soft slippers, and passed in and out of the ward noiselessly; but he heard that which was to him the sweetest sound he could remember of ever having heard. It was the tinkling of the pieces of ice in the glass of water which was being carried to him. When the attendant reached his bedside, he assisted him to arise, his arm about his neck, and held him up while Theodore sipped gratefully the refreshing drink, which somehow had been clarified, and was not the muddy water which he supposed would come up from the Mississippi River.

He lay back on his pillow and began to feel ashamed of himself. He felt so much better than he had two hours before, that he was willing to upbraid himself for having left his comrades when he was only a little sick. He felt of his own pulse, and said, "I have no fever." He put his hand under the cover, and stretched it down, and rubbed his sore leg to see how much pressure it would stand without giving him pain, and because he pressed it so hard and he did not flinch, he said, "I am not lame." He then tried to raise himself, and he found that

he could sit erect in his cot without much effort. Then his thoughts turned toward the camp, and he pictured the boys in their narrow limits on their hard bunks, and said, "What a wretch I am, just because a little sick, to leave them and come here with all these nice surroundings!"

After sitting up and meditating in this way awhile, he said, speaking, however, aloud, so that the man who occupied the cot next to him supposed he was talking to him: "It can not be helped now." Slipping down, he buried his face in his pillow, and drew the covers up over his shoulders; for, though it was midsummer, he felt chilly, and began to wonder why they had not closed that window in the forward part of the ward, and why they had not closed that door, for he was shivering with cold; and despite his efforts to keep quiet he continued to shiver, and would shake violently until his teeth chattered and until the cot itself trembled under the motion of his body.

While he was enduring the agonies of this chill the attendant returned, and going up to Theodore, who had drawn the covers tight around him, and partly covered his head, put his hand on Theodore's brow, and said soothingly, and yet as if there was something of humorousness in the sight:

"You seem to be a little cold."

"A little cold," said Theodore; "there is no little about it, I am freezing!"

"Just as I expected," said the attendant. "Just be patient, my friend; you will not freeze; and if I am not mistaken, before the lamps are lighted, you will be wanting a little of this freezing business."

"May be so," said Theodore; "but just now I believe I could sit in a tub of boiling water."

"All right," said the attendant, smiling. "Just be patient. About an hour from now you will be in a tub of boiling water."

"How is that?" said Theodore, shaking so he could scarcely talk.

"I can't explain it to you," said the attendant, "only you wait. You will think this is the hottest boat you ever saw, and that this is the hottest night—for it will be night about that time—and instead of wanting another blanket you will not want anything. However, I'll be with you, and we'll see." And with this, the attendant went on, leaving Theodore to his chill.

By and by he became quiet, and thought he was getting the mastery of the disease. He could now peep out from under the cover without his teeth chattering; he actually could turn the cover down from off his shoulder, and not be afraid that he would freeze. But while he was getting warm and comfortable, there seemed to

be iron bands clasped around his head, with a thumb-screw attachment, which some fiend was vigorously tightening; and when the bands had been contracted until they would crush his skull, he imagined that the same power had as quickly let loose the screws so that the bands expanded to their fullest extent, and his head, in attempting to follow the receding bands, was swelling to an enormous size. When the utmost tension of the skull had been reached, the evil spirit again clasped the bands, and began the process of reducing the size of his head by turning up the screws. He was sure that if he could only get hold of the bands, or get hold of the fiend, or in some way reach out and take hold of something that was present but invisible, that he could shake himself rid of this torment. By and by he imagined that the evil spirit had become tired of tormenting him, and had gone away, leaving the bands pushed up tight, to the utmost extent of the thumb-screws; and then some other spirit, or spirits, took possession of him, and dropped him into a hammock which was stretched on long ropes from tall poles, and that they were vigorously swinging him from side to side, tormenting him, at every push or pull of the hammock, with the fear that it would overturn, and he should be dropped into a fathomless abyss.

And thus he lay, and thought, and suffered, apparently wide awake, conscious of everything; and yet he was not, for by and by another gentle shake of his shoulder aroused him, and he opened his eyes to find the lights burning brightly all around, while by his side stood a white-aproned waiter, with a tray full of what, under other circumstances, would have been very tempting food. But as soon as Theodore saw it he waved him away with his hands; for he could not endure the thought of food, much less had he any desire to eat.

Then he knew that he had been asleep, and that what had occurred to him was but the imagination of a fevered brain. He closed his eyes, and again he was swung back and forth in his hammock; and there came to him a voice saying, with a pause between the words, as if waiting for him to come down from his upward swing each time:

“Say—comrade—what—did—you—do—that—for?”

Theodore made no reply, but remained with his eyes closed, swaying back and forth, wondering when such peculiar sensations would cease; for he was really swinging in his thought, and as really to him as though he had actually been in a hammock. He supposed the words to be some imagined remarks by some unreal per-

son, and made no reply to them. After a moment he heard again:

"I say—comrade—what—did—you—do—that—for?"

This time he opened his eyes, not because he expected to see anybody, but hoping that in that way he might dispel the strange illusion. As he did so, he caught the eager gaze of the man who occupied the bunk next to him, who was half reclining, supporting himself on his elbow, his neck stretched out, and his head forward over the edge of the cot.

"Have you been asleep?" he said.

"No," said Theodore, "I have not been."

"Well, why can't you answer a fellow?" he asked, with some show of impatience.

"I never heard you speak to me," said Theodore.

"I have been talking to you for the last five minutes, and you never said a word."

"Excuse me," said Theodore, "I did not hear you."

"Well, I say, what did you do that for?"

"Do what?" said Theodore, in surprise, with great effort keeping his eyes open, and with a greater effort keeping his mind straight.

"Why, you sent away everything that was brought you by the attendant to eat, and never touched it."

"I know it," said Theodore; "I did not want it."

"Well, there is lots of us fellows that do want it," he said; and then lay down on his pillow with an expression of great disappointment on his face. After a moment he lifted himself up, Theodore the meanwhile having been watching him, and said:

"The next time take it whether you want it or not. I will eat it!"

"All right," said Theodore; "the next time I will tell them to give it to you."

"No, do n't you do that," the man said, hastily; "keep it yourself, and then I will eat it when they are gone."

Theodore did n't know whether the man was in earnest and knew what he was saying, or whether he was delirious; so he turned over in his cot and faced the other way, and this time met the gaze of another comrade, who seemed to be in better spirits, and also more self-possessed than the other. He said to Theodore:

"What has that fellow been talking to you about?"

"Theodore said, evasively: "O, I don't know."

"Been asking you for something to eat, has n't he?"

"Yes," said Theodore.

"Well, he beats all the sick folks I ever saw," said the man, not caring whether the comrade in the farther bunk heard him or not; "he eats all they bring him, and begs all he can get from the rest of the fellows."

"Well, he is welcome to all of mine," said Theodore.

"That is not it," said the comrade. "The doctors won't let him have much if they know it. They say that he has a disease that gives him an enormous appetite, and it only makes him worse to eat."

Theodore was tired and drowsy, and closed his eyes again; and immediately there began to march before him a procession of soldiers, very much like the one who had wakened him to ask his share of the food, all begging him most pitiously to give them something to eat, while he had nothing to give. How long this dream or trance lasted he could not say, but after awhile he awoke. He knew the fever was gone, for the inevitable sweating process had commenced; he found the very pillow wet where the perspiration had rolled off his face before he had wakened.

Three days after he embarked on the boat—having in the meantime heard the attendants talk about being at Memphis, then at Columbus, Kentucky, then at Cairo, Illinois, and then

at other points on the Mississippi River—the boat stopped; and he judged from the bustle all around, and the preparations which were being made to remove the patients, that they had reached their journey's end. And so they had; for the boat was tied up at the wharf at Jefferson Barracks, Missouri.



Chapter XX.

IN COMFORTABLE QUARTERS.

THEODORE was assisted by two attendants to dress himself and to get down the stairs and out upon the levee. Here he found a large number of ambulances had come down to the water's edge, awaiting the coming of the sick soldiers. Such of them as were able to walk were marched up the levee, and proceeded afoot to the hospital. Such as were too sick to walk, or were injured in such a way as that they could not, were put into the ambulances, which filed off, one after another up the levee, and into the spacious grounds of Jefferson Barracks.

As they rode along over the smooth roadways, Theodore, looking out from the rear of the ambulance, as he leaned against the driver's seat in the forward part, was charmed with the sight. In the first place, there was an air of spaciousness. The roadways were broad and smooth; the walks, which followed the roadways for the most part, sometimes traversed green

swards, and were also broad and substantially built. The trees were large, massive, with wide-spreading branches, carefully trimmed and burdened with abundance of foliage, which was just beginning to turn under the first breaths of cool autumn nights. Beneath the trees, and bounded by the various driveways, were handsome lawns, in which were found large beds of beautiful flowers.

As the ambulance rolled slowly along, Theodore saw the spacious quarters allotted for the various departments,—handsome frame houses for the use of the officers, large buildings for the accommodation of various supplies, and everything which would betoken liberality and generous views on the part of the Government in providing a home for soldiers, and especially for the sick.

By and by the ambulance stopped, and Theodore was assisted to alight. When he had done so, he found himself standing upon a porch, across the front of a one-story board house. He was led around the corner of this house, and saw that the porch extended down the whole length of it, and the further end seemed at such a great distance from him, that it tired him to think of having to walk its length. He turned aside, however, and was led into the building.

Where he stood were tables and chairs, cases

of medicines, various kinds of cups, waiters, pitchers, and glasses; while before him stretched out two long rows of cots, similar to those he had seen on the boat. The interior of this building was painted white. The ceiling was white. The beds were dressed in white. The only relief to the whiteness of everything in sight were the black iron bedsteads, and the walnut-colored chairs and stools.

He was led down the aisle between the cots, which stood, as on the boat, foot to foot, the heads against opposite walls of the building, each cot occupying a space between windows; for there were as many windows as cots, that there might be, as occasion demanded, abundance of light or fresh air. The windows were all provided with heavy curtains, which could be lowered or raised at pleasure, to modify the degree of light required.

As on the boat, so here, he was assigned to a cot, and assisted to disrobe and to get into the bed. After all, this was a pleasant change. The motion of the boat, during the three days that he had been on the vessel, was monotonous and wearisome, as also was the constant "puff, puff" of the escaping steam. Here he was at rest. He did not like to admit it, and yet, as he thought of himself, he knew that while it was good for him to be there, yet he was far weaker

than when he left Helena. It was with difficulty that he stood on his feet; and not only the fact that he had eaten but very little during the time of his trip up the river would indicate that he had lost flesh, but he could tell that from the appearance of his hands, which usually had been plump and strong; but now he could gather the skin into a fold on the back, and his fingers began to look bony. He wondered how his face looked. It had been a long time since he had seen his own face, for they had had no looking-glasses.

Soon after he had nestled down into his bed, and was hoping to get into a quiet doze—for he felt sleepy—an attendant came to him, with several cards in his hand and a pencil over his ear, and, arousing him, said apologetically almost, but very kindly:

“Excuse me, but I must have your name.”

“Theodore Tompkins.”

“What is your regiment and company?”

“143d, Company C.”

“Where is your home?”

For a moment Theodore did not reply. He did not know what to say; but remembering the name of the town where Jenkins usually went to trade, he supposed he might call that home; so he said:

“Ocone, Illinois.”

"What is your father's name?"

"I have no father."

"What is your mother's name?"

"I have no mother."

"What is the name of your next friend?"

Instantly Theodore remembered that this was a question exactly like the one asked him, as they were starting South, by Colonel Smith. He was quick to see that it would not do now, as then, to answer this question by saying that Babbitt was his next friend; so, acting on the impulse of the moment, relying upon what Babbitt had told him just before they had separated at Helena, and believing that he was safe in doing so, he said:

"B. H. Carl" (Babbitt's father).

The man had written his answers on a card, and asking Theodore the post-office address of his next friend, he wrote that upon the card; then, reaching over, put the card into a bracket on the wall, made to receive it, just above Theodore's head, and then turned and left.

When he had gone, Theodore reached up and took the card out, and read it over and looked at it intently for some moments; and as he did so he realized that something had been gained in any event; for he had deliberately written there the name of one as his next friend who he supposed would, if occasion required,

take the place of his parents; and in his heart he believed that Babbitt's father would do so. He replaced the card in the bracket, and, with a contentment which he had not known before, he fell into sleep.

Night came and passed. During the night, however, he had been carefully examined by the surgeon in charge, and proper treatment prescribed for him. He remembered distinctly the surgeon coming to his cot, making the examination, turning down the cover and looking at his leg; but he could not remember anything after that. Whether he had been asleep or simply unconscious he did not know; but those who had waited on him during the night knew he had slept but very little, but had talked almost constantly.

When the morning came, however, he was quite himself again, and could understand perfectly where he was and why he was there. That day he watched the proceedings about him with very much of interest. He remembered that at the further end of the ward—for the building in which he was was only one of the wards of the hospital, which was large enough to accommodate hundreds and even thousands of soldiers—was a clock, which ticked softly the minutes as they slipped by, and at every quarter announced the flight of

time in almost muffled tones, and yet so distinct as to be heard anywhere in the ward. Never did the clock announce the quarter—so Theodore thought—that one or more attendants did not get up from the table where they were sitting, and, in slippered feet, as noiselessly as possible, hasten down the aisle and go to some cot to administer some remedy to the patient.

They came to him frequently, and waited on him as carefully as a brother could. Most of the attendants were men. Some of them, however, were ladies, with their uniform of white caps, white aprons, and dresses of some contrasting material.

As far as Theodore could judge of his own feelings and condition, he was not very sick. Indeed, he was beginning to have less and less of pain, and more and more a desire for sleep. As the attendants and physicians looked upon him, the very reverse was true so far as his illness was concerned; for they considered him in a very critical condition. There were hours during which he would apparently be asleep, and so soundly asleep that it was with difficulty that he was aroused to take the prescribed medicines. These periods of stupor were to him hours of most pleasant repose, followed with visions of everything that was good and lovely. The only distressing feature about his dreams

was, that he was ever on the verge of happiness, but never quite reaching it. His condition was such that he made no note of the lapse of time, nor did he reckon the coming and going of day or night. The only division of time which he made was that of awake and asleep. When awake or fully aroused, he was conscious of all his surroundings; but when in one of the stupors which came so frequently, he was practically as if under the influence of an opiate. It was during one of these that his limb was examined and dressed by the physician in attendance.

At one time, when he was aroused from his unconscious condition by a vigorous shaking and calling of the attendant, he opened his eyes, and saw bending over him the face of one that attracted his attention by its very motherliness; but he was unable to keep his eyes open or to hold that image before his mind, and it became to him a dream. After the lapse of what seemed hours, he again was aroused, and was awakened sufficiently to hear his name mentioned and some other names mentioned, and some voices in conversation; and he looked upon a face that was younger and fairer, but not kindlier, than the one which he had seen before. There was a strong effort on his part to give heed to what was said, and to keep the face before his eyes;

but he drifted off into a dream of homes which he had often pictured in his boyhood as being the possible home of his parents.

After this he could recollect but little, excepting the frequent attempts of the attendant to administer medicines, and his frequent efforts to take the prescribed remedies, though there came to him always the recollection of the bitterness of the doses which were given him.

One day, however, he opened his eyes, and was surprised and pleased to see sitting by his cot, watching him with intense interest, a lady whose face was very much like one of the faces he had seen so long, long ago. He was delighted that he could keep his eyes open, and that they did not involuntarily close as before. He was pleased because the lady did not vanish from his vision, as she had done the other time; and, though she said not a word, he could tell by the tenderness of the expression of her eyes that she was watching him with anxiety.

The lady was as much pleased as Theodore that his eyes did not close again, as they had so often done, and that there did not follow the heavy breathing and the deep stupor which had prevailed so long. She ventured to say, as his eyes looked into hers:

“Do you know me?”

Theodore attempted to speak. He did not

know why he could not speak; but he wondered if the voice he heard was his voice, when he said, in tones that were not his own, as far as he could recollect, but weak and uncertain, as if uttered by a tongue thick and almost paralyzed:

"I don't know you."

"No, I suppose not," the lady said, cheerfully and brightly, at the same time reaching out her hand to stroke his hair. She did not know whether it was best to make herself known to him then, to tell him all that she knew; so, as her eyes filled with tears, and even overrun and wet her face with their dropping, she said: "I am so glad; but go to sleep now, my dear. After awhile we will talk some more."

Just as she said this, some one else came softly, with hands clasped before her, and, stopping by the side of the lady, who looked up into her face, with joy in every lineament of her countenance, said:

"Does he know you?"

"He is better; he will know me," said the lady, and then turning towards Theodore, said, as he gazed in wonder, unable to determine why he should have been spoken to as he had been, or why the lady should have stroked his head: "Be quiet just a little while longer, and we will see."

Theodore was so glad that he was strong

enough to think and act for himself, that he was glad to shut his eyes and see if he could open them again ; so he made as if he would go to sleep, but frequently his eyelids would open, and he would glance at the lady, who still sat by his cot, watching him intently ; and when he did so, he found that she would frequently brush a tear from her eye, and that occasionally she would bite her lips, as if to suppress some strong emotion.

As he lay there quietly, seemingly without pain, he lifted his own hand and looked at it. He never had seen it so thin and pale. He put his hand to his forehead to brush back his hair, and was startled by the very apparent boniness of his own hand, as it moved over his forehead. Then he would turn and look at the watcher. Whoever she might be, he felt certain that he never had seen a lovelier face, and had never known a tenderer expression. Very soon the lady was joined by one of the attendants of the hospital, and together they whispered something, and they exchanged glances, looking occasionally toward Theodore, who might have heard if he had exerted himself, but who did not care to hear, nor did they seem inclined to talk to him, but were evidently overjoyed that he could hear or could talk if it was necessary.

When the attendant had gone, Theodore's lady friend came close to his cot, and again gently stroking his head, pushing her fingers through his hair, said :

"Are you quite comfortable?"

"O yes," he said, "almost too comfortable."

Though her eyes were again swimming in tears, she could not refrain from smiling at this queer way of putting it, and she said :

"How can you be too comfortable?"

"I do n't know," said Theodore feebly, his tongue almost refusing to act as he talked, giving his utterance an indistinctness which was wholly unnatural for him, "but this seems like as if it could n't last always?"

"What seems like as if it could n't last always?" she said slowly, repeating his words exactly.

"All this," Theodore said, lifting his hand and extending it as if to take in all of his surroundings.

"O, I hope not," said the lady. "We all hope not."

Then Theodore looked at her with a puzzled countenance, and she read in his expression the question which was in his mind, so she said :

"We do not want you to stay here always."

Theodore was determined to make a direct cut to the expression of the thought which was

in his mind. He was not particularly concerned about the hospital, nor about the comfortable cot, nor about the attendants; but some way there had suddenly sprung up in his heart a desire that he should not be separated from the face which had first come to him in his dreams, he thought, and which now bent over him with all the solicitude of a mother, or at least of a sister; so he said:

"I would like for all of this to last always."

"O no," said his watcher, "it would not be well for you; but there are better things for you when you are strong enough."

Theodore shook his head, and with a great effort, said—for, for the time, there had passed from his mind a recollection of his bright hopes and the prospects which had sprung up in his heart on account of the colonel's offer, and he thought only of the old home in the Flat Woods down by Oconee:

"I do n't want to go away from here." Then he paused and wondered if he dared say what was in his heart to say, and finally mumbled, though he made a great effort to speak it distinctly: "I do n't want to go away—from—you."

"From me!" said the lady in surprise, clasping both of her hands. "What do you know of me?"

Theodore looked at her intently a moment, and again shaking his head, slowly said:

"Nothing—everything—nothing."

He did not understand his own feelings. He seemed to know, and yet he could not tell what he did know. He lifted one of his feeble and pale emaciated hands as if he would touch her dress. She quickly divined his purpose, and clasped his hand in both of hers, and coming a little closer, pressed it to her heart, and when she could restrain her emotion sufficiently, said :

“You do not need ever to be separated from me, unless you want to.”

His eyes brightened at this, and his pale face was slightly flushed, but he could not understand. He had no idea to whom he was speaking. The only thought in his mind was that he seemed to be at rest, and he seemed to have found some one who really cared for him, and who could reciprocate the great love which he felt.

“Do you know who I am ?” the lady asked again.

“No,” said Theodore. “Yes—no—yes.”

She understood from this that he was uncertain, and she wondered if she would dare, while his strength was so feeble, his condition so critical, to say or do anything which might shock him, which might cause a relapse ; and while she thought of this, she ventured to say :

“Who do you think I am ?”

She was quite as much surprised by the answer as Theodore himself was by the thought

which flashed upon him in an instant, for he said :

“An angel!”

“No,” she said, smiling, “not so, not so; but would you, Theodore, like for me to be a sister to you?”

All this time she had held his hand in both hers. He did not reply, but his head dropped to one side on the pillow, and he closed his eyes, the meanwhile, however, closing his fingers over her hand nervously and tightly.

“I understand,” she said softly, resuming her seat on the stool by the cot, at the same time holding his hand, and occasionally stroking it gently with one of hers. “We must not talk any more. Can’t you go to sleep? I will sit right by you.”

Theodore opened his eyes and gazed at her silently for a moment, and then said :

“Yes, but will you wake me up before you go away?”

“O yes,” she said earnestly, “I will wake you up before I go away.” And then, as if she would comfort him to the very utmost of her ability, she said : “I will not go away without taking you with me.”

Theodore closed his eyes, and it seemed that he was asleep; but after a few moments he opened them again, and said, while the lady

smiled on him with unusual interest and affection:

"I surely have seen you somewhere."

"Perhaps so," she said brightly. "Indeed, I almost know so, but then you had better go to sleep, and we will talk more about this after awhile."

Theodore did not reply to this, but steadily gazed at his attendant, and seemed to exert himself to recollect some time or place when he had seen her. After awhile he said:

"I know where now—I have just thought of it!"

"Well?" she said, awaiting his reply.

"I have seen you twice."

He hesitated as if to make sure that he was right, and then asked:

"Has not Colonel Smith your picture?"

The lady almost laughed aloud, and said:

"Certainly; he has my picture. Did he show it to you?"

Theodore smiled and nodded.

"Where else did you see me?" she questioned.

"Did n't I see you before we went South?"

"I think so," she said. "But you must be quiet now. I am afraid you are talking too much."

"No," said Theodore. "It rests me to talk to you. I like to look at you."

"Very well, very well," she said, as if she would quiet him. "I will stay right here by you, and you will have a long, long time to look at me when you are better."

Theodore eagerly followed every movement she made. Finally he said:

"Then you are the colonel's sister?"

"Yes," she said, "I am. Did you know he sent word to me to come here to see you?"

"No," said Theodore, interestedly, "I did not know."

"Well, he did," she said. "Did you know there were other friends here to see you when I came?"

"No," Theodore said. "Yet it seems like as if I dreamed I saw somebody."

"It was not a dream," she answered; "it was real. Babbitt's mother was here, and his father."

Theodore's heart was touched by this news, and he hid his face a moment in the pillow; and when he lifted his eyes again to hers, she saw that they were wet from weeping. She understood his thought and knew something of his feeling, so she reached out her hand and again gently stroked his head and face, and told him to be quiet if he could sleep again, for she would surely waken him after he had rested awhile.



Chapter XXI.

A FORTUNATE MEETING.

THE letters written by the colonel and by Babbitt reached their destination at about the same time, and also the day after the hospital boat had tied up at the wharf at Jefferson Barracks.

The colonel's sister lost no time in making preparations for an immediate visit to the hospital. She was not a stranger to such a place, having spent several days with her brother while he was under treatment after the battle of Shiloh, and before he came home. She knew what she should see, and what to do in order to find the soldier she was looking for.

Babbitt's letter to his father was read and re-read, and a consultation called among the friends. There was no question but that Mr. Carl would go at once to see what could be done for the comfort of the boy more than the hospital authorities were doing; but whether Mrs. Carl should go with him, or whether Miss

Laura should accompany him, was undecided. It seemed, because of Mrs. Jacobus's presence at her home, it would be best for Mrs. Carl to remain, while Miss Laura should go.

"I am perfectly willing and even anxious to go," Miss Laura said, when talking about it; "but it may be that you, Mrs. Carl, could do so much more for the boy than I."

"I doubt not," said Mr. Carl, "that Theodore would be glad to see any of us under the circumstances, and would not be very choice as to which one it was."

"I should be glad to go," said Mrs. Carl, "except for Jakey's mother. I can not leave her, and I can not send her away."

For some time they discussed the matter, trying to arrive at the conclusion which would be best for all concerned. Finally Miss Laura settled it by saying:

"You go, Mrs. Carl. It is proper you should. As for Mrs. Jacobus, she can come to our house. It is really the best place for her, if I do say it myself; for we have an abundance of help and plenty of room, and she can just as well be there as here, and better; so you go, and I will take all the responsibility of looking after Jakey's mother."

The matter being settled in this way, the rest of the afternoon and the night was spent

in hasty preparation for the trip to the hospital. At noon the next day Mr. Carl and his wife and Miss Laura were at the depot, where the former took the cars for St. Louis, intending to go from there to the hospital, Miss Laura already having performed her part of the contract by transferring Mrs. Jacobus to her own home.

The day passed without incident, and toward evening they found themselves in St. Louis, at the Carondelet depot, waiting for the outgoing train to Jefferson Barracks. They had noticed on the train down from home a young lady that they seemed to have met before, as her face was familiar. They also observed that when they arrived at East St. Louis, she got off the cars and took the same 'bus that they had, and together they rode across the river on the ferry and then to the depot. When they got on the cars at Carondelet depot for the hospital, the same lady was observed to take a seat not far from them. When she reached the depot at Jefferson Barracks, she alighted just ahead of Mr. and Mrs. Carl, and, with the air of one who seemed to know just what to do and how to do it, she hastened away.

Mr. Carl and his wife, however, unaccustomed to such places and such duties, were obliged to make inquiries, first of one and then of another, as to how they could reach the hos-

pital at the barracks. They finally obtained the desired information, were furnished with the proper passes, and started out in search of Theodore.

They were directed to Ward "K," and immediately hastened there. They gave the name of the party that they were seeking, and one of the attendants led them down the aisle to the cot occupied by Theodore. They were surprised to find sitting by his side the very lady who had come down on the train with them, had crossed the river with them in the same 'bus, had come to the barracks, and disappeared from them on the platform of the depot. She arose as they came to the cot and stopped, and, glancing at Theodore and then at them, said:

"A friend of yours?"

"Yes," Mr. Carl said; "or, rather, a friend of my son, and a friend of my son is my friend. And is he a friend of yours?" Mr. Carl asked in return.

"Yes," said the lady; "he is a friend of my brother's, and that makes him my friend."

"And is he asleep?" asked Mrs. Carl.

"Yes, asleep. We roused him once, but he staid awake only a few minutes—scarcely a minute, really. I have been waiting here hoping that he would recover from the stupor in which

he seems to be; but my waiting so far has been in vain."

The attendant, who had stood by during this conversation, now walked up to the bedside where Theodore lay, and, shaking him gently yet vigorously by the shoulder, called his name repeatedly. There seemed to be an effort on the part of Theodore to awaken. His eyes would open partly, and close again; his lips would move as if to speak, and then he would settle down again into a deeper slumber.

Mrs. Carl came near on the other side of the cot from the attendant, and, leaning over, called him by name, and said:

"Theodore, do n't you remember Babbitt?"

It seemed as if his eyes would open at that, but they did not. Encouraged by this sign, she placed her hand upon his shoulder, and shook him, and said again:

"Theodore, do n't you remember Babbitt? Would n't you like to see Babbitt's mother?"

There was just a suspicion of a smile on Theodore's face as these words were uttered, and Mrs. Carl persisted, supposing that she could very soon arouse him.

"Theodore, Babbitt's mother wants to speak to you; won't you open your eyes?"

He did open his eyes then, and looked at her.

She smiled into his face; but again the eyes were closed, and the heavy stupor came on.

"He looked at me," said Mrs. Carl, turning to the lady.

"O, did he?" she said. "I wish he would look at me."

Then she got up and took Mrs. Carl's place, and shaking him, said:

"Theodore, do you remember the colonel?"

At these words Mrs. Carl and her husband exchanged knowing looks, and turned their gaze intently upon the lady. Theodore actually bowed his head once or twice, as if assenting to that remark.

"Theodore," she said earnestly, again shaking him a little more vigorously, "would you not like to see the colonel's sister?"

And again his eyes opened, and as he looked at her he smiled, and she smiled upon him; and again he sank into a stupor, from which it was impossible to arouse him. After vainly trying to awaken him, Miss Smith turned aside—for it was she—and met the gaze of Mr. and Mrs. Carl.

"And you are Babbitt's mother?" she said, extending both hands.

"Yes," Mrs. Carl said; "and you, I suppose, are Colonel Smith's sister?"

"Yes," Miss Smith said.

Then Mr. Carl reached out his hand and

grasped the colonel's sister's hand. Pressing it warmly, he said:

"I am so glad to see you. I am glad you are here, for surely this poor boy needs all the attention we can give."

"He does seem to be in an almost hopeless condition," said Miss Smith. "What can we do for him?"

"I don't know," said Mrs. Carl, "but I am willing to stay and do all I can. Of course, I do not know much about him; but for Babbitt's sake we have come here to see him, and for his sake we will do all in our power to be done."

"Of course," said Miss Smith, talking low, "you know some of the circumstances, if not all, that have made my brother and myself such warm friends of this soldier."

"Yes," said Mr. Carl, "I know all of the circumstances; but without that, if you knew all of the facts connected with this boy, I am sure you would be interested in him, even though he had done nothing to merit your love and favor."

While they were talking thus, an attendant came to them, and said:

"I beg your pardon, ladies, but it will be necessary for you to withdraw to the reception-room if you wish to talk to each other."

"O, excuse me," said Miss Smith; "of course I know that I am disturbing others around."

"I beg your pardon," said Mr. Carl, "it was unintentional."

"I understand," the attendant said apologetically; "I knew that you simply needed to be told of a place where you might retire. If you wish, I will lead the way."

So they followed him out of the ward, across one of the green swards into a room near the office of the chief surgeon, and there they sat and talked.

Naturally enough, Mr. Carl told Miss Smith all he knew of Theodore's antecedents, and related with much particularity the account which had been given him by Mrs. Jenkins, including the story of the golden chain and locket.

Miss Smith had in her possession the letter which the colonel had written her, and which inclosed the one that Babbitt had found in the hospital at Helena. This she handed to Mr. Carl to read, the meantime rising and walking the floor nervously. When he had finished reading the letter and returned it to her, she said:

"I never once supposed that my coming to this hospital at this time could have awakened in me such a flood of recollections of the past. I dare not believe, and yet you will not blame me when I say that, from what you tell me, and from what I know, and what that letter says, that that sick soldier is none other than my brother."

"Impossible!" said Mrs. Carl impulsively; and yet she did not mean that.

"No," Miss Smith said, "it is not impossible; and yet I do not wish to do anything rash. It would be better for me to wait, and to trace these clues back to their source, or as far as possible. My brother and I have had our hopes aroused so many times, only to be disappointed, that I have said that I never would cling to any hope again unless it should first prove to be well founded."

"Well," said Mr. Carl, "I can appreciate your feelings. Let us look at the evidence as we have it now before us, and let us see what there is in this to justify us in supposing that Theodore is your brother. In the first place, you know, as your brother knows, that on the night preceding that accident, he had your mother's locket attached to the golden chain about his neck. Well, Mrs. Jenkins declares that the baby that was brought to them had a chain and locket about his neck, and I know that I have this chain and locket at my home."

"Yes," said Miss Smith eagerly.

"Well, that fact would go to show—although not proving conclusively—would go to show that the baby which Mrs. Jenkins found, and the baby which was lost on that boat, or supposed to be lost on that boat, are one and the same."

"Yes," said Miss Smith, impulsively again; "but"—there had come a doubt in her mind just as Mr. Carl had finished talking—"but how do I know that this Theodore, in the hospital there, sick, is the same child that Mrs. Jenkins says her husband got of the fisherman?"

"O, I see," said Mr. Carl. "Of course there is a possibility of a mistake. It is *possible* that this Theodore is Jenkins's own child, and that the baby which was found was dead when found. I see how that might be."

"Yes," said Miss Smith, dejectedly, "it might be that way."

"And then," suggested Mrs. Carl, "this letter which I have just been reading"—for she was reading it while the others were talking—"clearly states that that baby—for he was surely your brother, for this lady refers to your father and your mother—was found and was cared for by friends in St. Louis."

"So it does," said Miss Smith; "but I am sure that that letter, if it does refer to my brother—and I believe it does—is mistaken; for I and my brother were on the same boat with this lady."

"Why, how do you know that?" said Mr. Carl. "Do you remember? And how do you know who wrote this letter?"

"Well, I did not remember; but I have been

thinking it over since I read that letter, and I remember there was a lady on that boat who became quite intimate with mamma; and I remember that I liked her looks, and she seemed to think a great deal of me. After my brother and I were picked up, I saw the very same lady once on the boat, but only once. She was just going into her state-room, and I do not remember seeing her again."

"Well," said Mr. Carl, "that seems to agree, and seems to explain her notion that the baby was rescued; for she says she understood from the passengers that Mr. Smith's children were found; and so his children were—you and your brother. And it says that the children were taken care of by friends in St. Louis; and so they were. You and your brother were cared for, as you say."

"Yes," said Miss Smith, "that is it."

"O, I know who wrote this letter," said Mrs. Carl, having glanced over it again. "I am sure I do. The whole thing comes to me now as clear as day. This letter is signed 'Clara.' It is written to her uncle, and on the back here it is addressed to Hon. S. Sebastian; and, moreover, it is dated at Memphis. Now, Babbitt wrote to me at Memphis that he saw a lady there who knew me when I was a girl; or, rather, saw three ladies—the Miss Wilsons. I remember

them distinctly. I know one of them was reported lost in a river disaster. One was named Emma, one was Lucy, and one was Clara; and I happen to know that their mother's maiden name was Sebastian; so I am very certain that this Clara writing to Senator Sebastian is none other than Clara Wilson."

"Well," said Mr. Carl, "that is remarkable; but, after all, it does not help us in our dilemma. We know that Mr. Smith and his family were on that boat, and who else was on it makes no difference to us now, or who else was saved. We know that two of Mr. Smith's children were saved; we know that there was a baby that had a locket and chain when he went to sleep in the state-room that night before the terrible explosion. Now, here comes Mrs. Jenkins, who says that Theodore was that baby, and it would seem to be so; but how can we know?"

Miss Smith rose again, having seated herself during this discussion, and, walking up and down the room, wrung her hands and said over and over again:

"If I could but have one little proof that this soldier and my baby brother are the same, I would be the happiest mortal on earth. One little proof is all I ask. He can not tell me; you can not tell me; no one can tell me! How

can I know? O, it seems too hard that I should be so near and yet be so far away from the realization of the hope of my life!"

"It is indeed very sad, very sad!" said Mr. Carl. "And I would like to be able to unravel the mystery for you; but it can not be done, and I beg of you now to put the matter aside. We are here, not because this soldier-boy is your brother. We never thought of such a thing when we left our home, nor did you."

"I know it," said Miss Smith calmly, again seating herself, folding her hands in her lap, and looking steadily at the floor; "I know it."

"I am here," Mr. Carl said, "because Babbitt asked me to come; and I shall do all I can for the boy because he is Babbitt's friend."

"I am here," said Miss Smith, "because he is my brother's friend, and I shall do all I can." Then, as if she had gained the mastery over herself, she arose and calmly said: "Let us lay the matter aside, and do all that it is our duty to do for Theodore, whether he is my brother and my mother's child or not. He is somebody's child and the friend of our friends."

"Right nobly said," said Mr. Carl. "Can you stay any time?" he inquired.

"O yes," Miss Smith said. "I can stay as long as necessary; there is nothing to call me home."

"Well, perhaps we had better leave him in your hands. I am sure he would be well cared for. I could stay, and would stay, only that my wife and I have left our house entirely alone, and it would be well for one of us to go back as soon as possible."

"Very well," said Miss Smith, "I will stay and take care of him, or have some one employed especially to look after him. It is now quite late; neither of you can return home until to-morrow, so suppose we leave the matter right where it is. We will find accommodations somewhere, I presume, until to-morrow."

"Yes," said Mr. Carl, "I want to see him again before I go back."

"Then," said Miss Smith, meditatively, "suppose, as it seems necessary you should return home, that you stay over night, and that to-morrow you both go back, and I will let you know every day or two how he is getting along."

So they separated for the night, all three going to their own hotel for accommodations.



Chapter XXII.

A NEW NAME.

THE next day, by previous appointment, they met at the hospital. Mrs. Carl took with her three of Babbitt's night-shirts. She had not known just what would be proper for her to take to minister to the comfort of the boy, and she provided such things as she would like to have seen provided for her own child.

After seeing Theodore on his cot, clad in the rough woollen shirt which the Government furnished, she was glad that she had thought of the night-robes. So the next day, when they met as agreed upon, she asked the attendant if it would be in accordance with the rules to have the rough and much-soiled flannel shirt removed and the night-robe substituted; he said:

"Certainly, certainly, there can be no objection to that whatever."

Then she said:

"As I am not going to stay, and I can not

do much for the boy, I want to put the shirt on him myself."

"And let me help you," Miss Smith said. "I feel myself it is but little I can do. The attendants here are so kind, and watch him so closely, that there remains but little for me to do."

"Very well," the attendant said, smilingly, "do as you please. I am sure you ladies will not do anything that will injure him."

Mr. Carl, the meantime, had gone out of the ward to make some inquiries as to what might be done from outside for the sick soldier.

Theodore was wholly unconscious of what was going on about him. There had been no return of consciousness since the previous day, when he had opened his eyes in answer to Mrs. Carl's call. Miss Smith stood on one side of the cot, Mrs. Carl on the other.

"Now, when I lift him up," said Mrs. Carl, putting her strong arms under the shoulders of Theodore, and lifting him into a sitting posture, leaning over so that his head might drop back on her shoulder, "you pull his shirt off that arm, and then come around on this side and pull it off this arm. Now be quick, if you please, so that he will not be chilled."

"O, there is no danger of chilling any one such a hot day as this," said Miss Smith, at the same

time obeying Mrs. Carl's directions, pulling the shirt off one arm, and hastening around the cot to pull it off the other.

The night-robe had been opened and spread out on the cot, ready to be substituted for the shirt. When the flannel shirt was entirely removed, Theodore's head dropped over against Mrs. Carl's face. Miss Smith had gathered the night-robe into her hands, and was making it ready to drop over his head, when Mrs. Carl turned her face a little, so that she looked down upon Theodore's shoulders.

"What a peculiar mark is this!" she said without thought.

"How is that?" said Miss Smith, coming to her with the gown in her hand.

As she was about to put it over the sick soldier's head she looked in the direction that Mrs. Carl was looking, and immediately sank upon her knees by the bedside, leaving the soldier unclothed, his night-robe in her hands. She buried her face in the cot, and for a moment was silent, though convulsed with deepest emotion.

Mrs. Carl was excited and surprised, and supposed that Miss Smith had fainted; so she called to an attendant who was near to come and help. He came, and assisted in putting the shirt on Theodore, and helped to replace

him on his pillow and to cover him up; and as they did so Miss Smith arose, and, with pale face and tearless eyes, looked at the sick soldier intently, and then sat down on the stool near by and pressed her clasped hands over her heart.

"Are you ill?" said Mrs. Carl, coming to her relief.

"No, not ill," said Miss Smith.

"Why, I thought you had fainted."

"No, I did n't faint." And then, lifting her eyes pleadingly to Mrs. Carl, she said: "O, Mrs. Carl, do you think I dare believe it?"

"Why, Miss Smith," said Mrs. Carl, anxiously, "believe what? Do you know what you are saying?"

"Yes, yes," she said, "I know what I am saying. Did you not show me that mark on Theodore's back?"

"Certainly," said Mrs. Carl; "I am sorry I called your attention to it. Those things often happen."

"Yes, I know," said Miss Smith, the color coming rapidly to her face, her set lips relaxing and her eyes sparkling; "I know they often happen; but, Mrs. Carl, do you think I dare believe it?"

"Why, my dear child!" said Mrs. Carl, putting her arms around Miss Smith and drawing

her tenderly to her. The meanwhile Mr. Carl had returned, and an attendant had also come to see what was the trouble with Miss Smith.

"Let me tell you," she said, and she took Mrs. Carl's arm from around her neck, and, clasping both of her hands in hers, she looked up at her and said earnestly, "I believe I dare believe!"

"What is that?" Mr. Carl said. "Has something unusual happened?"

"Only this," said Miss Smith, rising and leaning upon Mrs. Carl, while she reached out one hand to Mr. Carl, who took it into his—"only this: I believe I have the one thing that I have longed for to satisfy me that Theodore is my brother."

"And what is that?"

"O, if I only dared believe it!" she said again as the doubt arose in her mind; "but I will tell you. I am foolish, I know; but I have been so often disappointed, and now it seems as if I am upon the threshold of the very happiest hour in my life. If what I believe is true, that is not Theodore Tompkins there. There is no such person as Theodore Tompkins. That is my brother, Oswald Smith!"

"How so?" said Mr. Carl. "What have you discovered?"

"My brother Oswald," Miss Smith said,

"was a perfect child—the very picture of health, bright and beautiful, loved of everybody; marred in no respect, either in mind or body, except that down between his shoulders was a great strip of black hair. My mother said she would have given everything if that could be removed or never had been there." And then, as if overcome entirely by her feelings, and scarcely knowing where she was, Miss Smith clasped her hands and lifted her eyes, and said: "O, angel mother! that which you wanted most never to have been, surely is that which shall bring to your children the greatest joy of their lives. I *will* believe," she said; "I *do* believe! It can not be otherwise!" And she crept forward and knelt beside the cot. Reaching out both hands, she clasped the pale face of her brother, stroked his forehead, and looked at him as if she would discover in his face some resemblance to his parents.

In the mean time Mrs. Carl had drawn near, and also the attendant and Mr. Carl. All eyes moistened, all hearts were beating in sympathy with the sister. Rubbing her hand up over the soldier's forehead and pushing the hair back, she examined it critically for a moment, and said: "My father's forehead; I see it now. It can not be otherwise." Bringing her hand down gently over his eyes, stroking his nose tenderly,

she said: "My father's nose. It can not be otherwise." And then, rising and stooping over him, she kissed his lips, and said: "My mother's lips! It can not be that they should not be." Then, arising, she turned to Mr. and Mrs. Carl, and said:

"O what joy will the news of this day's discovery bring my brother! To think that he had written for me to come to this place to see one who had befriended him in time of danger, not knowing that it was his own darling brother that was to be cared for! To think that he owes his life, as he has so often written me, to the heroic courage of my darling Oswald! You may go," she said. "I will not go until his eyes look into mine and know me—until his lips shall speak my name, until his arms shall be clasped around my neck! I shall not leave this cot. You may go, Mr. Carl, Mrs. Carl—I will stay."

Without a word, Mrs. Carl came and clasped Miss Smith to her arms and kissed her cheek. Mr. Carl reached out his hand and clasped Miss Smith's hand warmly, and simply said, "Good-bye," and they bowed themselves out, knowing that their charge was safe in the keeping of his sister.

Mr. and Mrs. Carl returned to their home; and, supposing that Miss Smith would be

anxious to have in her own possession the locket, at once expressed it to her; so that within three days afterward she had the precious trinket in her keeping. Opening it, she feasted her eyes upon the picture which it contained—the picture of her father.

She wondered how she could best make herself known to her brother without exciting him to such an extent as to cause an aggravation of the fever under which he seemed to be wasting away.

For several days, nearly all of the time, except when taking needed rest, she sat by Oswald's cot waiting for the time to come when she could make herself known. Thus the days went by, hope and fear alternating as he seemed to rally a little, and then sink into apparently a greater stupor, for nearly a week refusing to take any kind of nourishment, although there was no difficulty in administering to him the prescribed remedies.

As soon as she had satisfied herself as to the identity of the sick soldier, she had telegraphed to her brother as fully as possible the facts which she had obtained; and, as quickly as the message could flash across the wires and be delivered to her, came the reply, with the added words: "I almost was sure of it myself." After the message came, by the slower movement

of the mails, a letter. With these, and with the locket, she was waiting by the cot of her brother, when he opened his eyes and talked to her as has been narrated in a preceding chapter. She said nothing more to him that day, but was greatly delighted that he manifested such pleasure in having her near him. Indeed, while she sat by his cot he was perfectly quiet, and, if not asleep, rested peacefully.

When she was necessarily away, if he was awake, he was very restless, and constantly asking the attendant when she would come back. He was surprised at his own feelings, and wondered how it was that he did not feel toward her as he had felt toward the colonel; that is, hesitating to put himself under obligations, or admitting, for a moment, that he was pleased to be with him.

She did not know that, for many weeks, Oswald had been tormented with the thought that he was possibly the colonel's brother; and worried because there had not occurred to him any way by which he could surely establish his identity, and make them know that there was no scheme laid by him to impose on them. So, when she had announced herself as sister to the colonel, she was somewhat surprised to find that the news did not affect the soldier as she supposed it would. He was not embarrassed, was no more reserved than before.

Indeed, he seemed to be more at ease, if that were possible, than he had been before he knew that she was the colonel's sister.

He seemed so much better the next day that she believed—and she was strengthened in this belief by the indorsement of the attending surgeon—that no evil would result if she would make known to Oswald what she was most anxious to tell.

After the morning work had been done throughout the hospital, everything cleaned around about the cots, breakfast given to such as could eat, and other routine matters gone through with, Miss Smith sat down by her brother, and said:

“I have a letter here from the colonel. Would you like to have me read it to you?”

“Yes,” he said, “I would. I would like to hear anything from him.”

She commenced to read the letter; but had not gone very far when she changed her mind, lest, if she should read on, the surprise would be too sudden when she should come upon what the colonel had said in answer to her telegram. So she made an excuse for putting it aside, and commenced to toy with the locket which hung about her neck, suspended by the very same chain which had so long ago been found around her brother's neck. He noticed this

movement, and in some way, divined her purpose; and, looking into her eyes, smiled knowingly. This surprised her. She said:

"Have you seen this locket before?"

"O yes, many a time," he said.

"And do you know where it came from?"

"O yes; Mr. Carl sent it to you."

"And do you know why I have it instead of you?"

Her heart almost ceased to beat as she waited his reply. He did not speak at once, but looked her steadily in the eye to see if he might not read therein a certainty of what he hoped was true. Encouraged, he reached one hand out toward her, which she immediately clasped in hers, and said:

"I think I know."

"What is it?" she asked, bending over him, her face almost touching his in her eagerness to catch the words which came feebly and faintly.

Emboldened by this act, Oswald reached up the other arm, she having still retained his hand in hers, and put it about her neck, drawing her face down close to his, so that he could whisper into her ear, while her heart beat violently, and her face flushed with the anxiety that no words could express:

"Because you are the colonel's sister."

"Yes, yes," she said; "but what else?"

He disengaged his hand from her clasp, and reaching it up, clasped both arms about her neck, and hugged her close, while he said, panting for breath to utter the words :

"Because—you—are—my—sister!"

Then followed a flood of tears which she could not restrain. When she could control her emotion sufficiently, she said :

"Yes, yes, I am ; but who told you?"

"I have known it, or believed it, a long time," he said. "Do you believe it?" he asked.

"Believe it," she said, kneeling by the cot, and drawing herself back, gazing intently and lovingly in his eyes. "Believe it," she asked again. "O, my darling brother, I could not help believing it."

And then she thrust one arm under his back, and rubbing her hand up and down between his shoulders, said, laughingly: "That is a mark that I could never forget, which no water could wash out, which no time could change. Ah! my brother, many a time have I stood by my mother when you were being bathed, and wondered that such an ugly mark as that should be given to such a pretty baby."

Oswald was completely surprised ; but his heart beat joyously, because he was now satisfied better than he had been, or could have been otherwise, that there was no mistake, because

she could not have known of that unless she had been his own true sister.

"And the colonel?" said Oswald, hesitatingly.

"The colonel!" said his sister, with wide open eyes. "Can't you say 'brother,' just once? I know it would seem strange; but try it!"

Oswald smiled, closed his eyes a moment, and then opened them, and said feebly:

"And does brother know?"

"Yes, yes, darling, your brother knows; and he is happier than words can tell."

"Then I don't have to go back."

"Go back where?" she said. "To your old home? No, never! never!"

"I am so glad," he said, closing his eyes and manifesting a weariness which alarmed his sister, and she hastened to beg of him not to say any more, but to wait.

"For we have years and years," she said, "to talk this all over, and I will never leave you, and you will never leave me."

Thus assured, as she sat by him and gently stroked his head, he fell asleep, and slept peacefully for many an hour.

When he awoke he found his sister bending over him; for she had left her place on the stool at the first signs of his awakening, and stood by his cot, ready to supply every want as

soon as known. Softly she said, her face pressed soothingly against his hot cheeks, that were dry and red with fever:

"You have slept so quietly. Do you feel better?"

"I never believed in heaven before," he said, as well as his parched lips and thickened tongue would permit, "but I do now. I am there!" And he caressed the face of his sister, and laughed amid the tears that trickled down his cheeks. These she wiped away with a dainty handkerchief, delicately perfumed, mingling hers with his; but they were tears of joy, every one of them.

"There is another word I want to hear you say," she said, after a little. "Will you?"

He smiled and replied: "Anything you want me to do I will do."

"Say sister."

"Sister! *My* sister!"

"That's a darling!"

"I am saying—that word—all the time—in my mind—and wondering—if—it is all a *dream*," he said feebly and with great effort.

"O, my precious brother! it is not a dream. Does n't your leg hurt you?" seeing him wince a little.

"Nothing hurts me when you look at me that way."



Chapter XXIII.

THE NEWS IN CAMP.

THE hot sand-hill along the side of which the colonel's regiment was camped in Arkansas was not a place to make one happy with life's surroundings, and did not invite exuberant expressions of joy, even when one was most joyous. To be quiet and to keep cool, was the chief endeavor of all—from the colonel down.

But the colonel was conscientious, and, though the time of service had nearly expired, he did not neglect his duty to instruct the officers and men in military tactics.

He had constructed near his head-quarters an arbor of green boughs brought from the distant timber. It was spacious enough to accommodate a hundred men or more; and here he called the company officers daily, and taught them the movements of a battalion, questioning them as to what orders should be given to bring about a given formation.

In this gathering military etiquette was dis-

carded, and all were permitted to appear in the coolest attire at hand, and to assume such positions as seemed most comfortable.

The colonel sat on a camp-stool, a picture of patient uncomfortableness. His hat lay by his side; his hair was brushed back from his white and expansive forehead; beads of perspiration stood out on his face, and streams of sweat ran down his neck, which was bare of tie or collar; his coat and vest hung on a projection of the rough pole behind him, which held up the arbor at that end; his suspenders were thrown off his shoulders, and dropped by his sides in graceful curves; his shirt was made to take on the appearance of a child's blouse-waist, and his arms were uncovered to the elbow, where the sleeves of his shirt were rolled loosely; his slippers were the only tight-fitting part of his apparel, and even above them the trousers had been rolled, to give the air every possible chance to soothe the burning flesh.

Before him and around him squatted, rolled, and sat the officers, every one red with heat and streaming with perspiration, listening to their instructor sometimes, but oftener thinking of the enjoyment they should have when they got back home, and could lie on green and sweet grass, under thick-boughed trees, sipping ice-water or taking a drink of lemonade from glasses tinkling

with bits of ice that jingled against each other and the glasses!

"Corporal Carl," said the colonel, mopping his forehead with a silk handkerchief from which one might already squeeze water, "suppose you should hear the command—"

At that instant the colonel saw a messenger approach with an envelope in his hand, and paused to wait his coming. He took the message, read it hastily, and said abruptly:

"Further study is postponed until to-morrow at this hour. You may retire to your quarters."

He led all the rest in vacating the arbor and finding the privacy of his tent.

Five minutes afterward, Babbitt, Jakey, and George were in the tent with him, for he had sent for them.

Smiling broadly, and with difficulty restraining his emotion of joy, he said:

"Boys, it is all true!"

"How 's that, colonel?" asked George.

"Theodore is the baby!"

"Is the what, colonel?" queried Babbitt.

"Theodore is our brother!"

"Not truly, truly?"

"No doubt about it!"

"Not glad, or anything, colonel?" said George, his tender heart so touched that he hastily dashed away a tear of sympathy.

"Glad!" exclaimed the colonel, "I can scarcely wait the two weeks to pass before we can go home."

Jakey said nothing, but his beaming face showed clearly how his own soul was stirred by the glad tidings.

"I thought it all the time," the colonel went on, "but dared not say so. I hoped something would crop out of his manner or speech that would give me a clew, but it did n't."

"And he thought so, too," said Babbitt.

"He!" said the colonel in surprise.

"Yes; but he was too proud to let you know it."

"Since when did he think so?"

"Since the night you talked to us on the train."

"I would never have guessed it from his actions," the colonel said proudly.

"Of course not!" said George; "but you would have guessed it, may be, if we had told you the secret of our little circle when we took you in, do n't you think?"

"And what is the secret? Can you tell me now?"

"Certainly; but you tell us if your baby brother had an infallible mark."

"A mark!" said the colonel, looking from one to another in greatest surprise. "A mark!" For

a moment he was silent. "Why did I not think of that? He had—a patch of hair between his shoulders."

"And so had Theodore!" they exclaimed together.

"Then that is what sister has seen and why she telegraphs me, 'All doubts gone!'"

"Theodore was sensitive about it," said Babbitt, "and made us promise never to mention it."

"The poor boy!" said the colonel; "he will never regret again that it is there."

"Will we get to see him again?" asked Babbitt anxiously.

"Get to see him! You certainly will if we live until we reach home."

"Or if he lives," suggested George quietly.

"He will—he must!" said the colonel impulsively. "God would not let us look upon the treasure, and then snatch it from us."

"I wish Theodore believed in God," said Babbitt, with a sigh.

"And doesn't he?" the colonel asked, a shadow of disappointment clouding his face a moment.

"No, I am afraid not—at least that is what he said once. We dropped the subject when we saw we could not agree," Babbitt replied.

"How should he?" suggested George. "How

can we believe in one of whom we have not heard? And Theodore never heard of God—not as we have heard of him—for his life has been a fearfully lonely and barren one.”

“Poor, poor Oswald!” sighed the colonel, and for a second he hid his face in his hands.

“Is that his name now?” Babbitt asked softly.

“Now, and before too. Do not call him Theodore, boys, any more. Call him Oswald. Theodore may have doubted God’s existence, but Oswald can not. He is Oswald, not Theodore.”

“Let him stop off and visit us, Colonel, for a little while. Father would be delighted to have him, and we will try to show him where rests our faith,” pleaded Babbitt.

“My dear boy,” the colonel answered, “I can not let him stop, for we want him all the time; as to his belief—or rather, unbelief—I feel it my precious privilege to lead him to light and liberty.”

“I envy you your charge,” said George earnestly; “for I know he will grow into a fine Christian man, and to you will belong the credit.”

“To me will belong the *joy*, say,” the colonel said.

“Not *all* the joy,” Babbitt urged smilingly; “part of *that* will be ours.”

“I am sure you are right,” he replied. “I

can imagine how happy you already feel in his restoration to his family."

"My!" said Babbitt. "Think of father and mother and Miss Laura—how they will rejoice!"

"And Mrs. Jacobus!" said George. "But for her, who could have solved the mystery?"

They glanced at Jakey, and his eyes drooped under this kindly gaze.

"How is your mother?" the colonel inquired, gently.

Jakey shook his head, but did not look up. He could not speak.

"Never mind, Jakey," the colonel said, putting his hand on the lad's head. "I was your friend for your father's sake, but now I am doubly so for your mother's sake. I want you to come to our house and visit us, when we all get home. Will you?"

"Yes, sir," Jakey replied, in an undertone.

"But you can not keep him, Colonel," Babbitt said, earnestly.

"Why so? His mother can come, too."

"But Miss Laura has first claim, you know."

"She can come, too," said the colonel, gallantly.

"Do you intend to take the whole circle under your charge?" laughingly asked Babbitt.

"Just as well," said the colonel, good humor-

edly; "for I have half now, counting Miss Laura!"

"If she goes, and Jakey goes, and Thee—Oswald is there, I could n't stand it to be left behind," Babbitt said, lightly; but he was more in earnest than his manner suggested.

"I will send for you—and George, too," the colonel said.

The tent was but little more than a canopy, for the sides had been lifted, and were tied close up, that circulation of air should be free; so that all the regiment saw the colonel and his guests laughing and talking, apparently ignorant of the intense heat that was making that side-hill a frying-pan, and wondered what was the theme of conversation. They did not wonder long; for as the Little Corporal's mess went to their tent, they told all they met the good news, and it ran throughout the camp rapidly.

The next day a formal note was received at the Little Corporal's mess, which said:

"Colonel Smith earnestly desires that Babbitt Carl, Jakey Jacobus, and George Patton shall not engage themselves in any way after discharge from this service, until he has had time to confer with them."

"What does it mean?" said George.

"A good place and prompt pay," said Babbitt. Jakey said nothing, but wondered greatly.



Chapter XXIV.

HIS OWN HOME.

AFTER two weeks, Oswald was so far recovered that the surgeons said he might start home with his sister.

He was not the robust, well-favored, and ruddy-faced young man that fled from Farmer Jenkins's cruelty in early May. Instead, he was thin, pale, trembling, and sorely afflicted in body. Nevertheless, he was strong in spirit, and could not see why he was not as strong in body.

His sister yielded to his entreaty, and permitted him to dress himself in his uniform the morning they were to start home, and walk to the station to take the car for Carondelet.

His step was not only slow, but exceedingly uncertain; for as he walked, helped by a cane on one side and his sister's arm on the other, there were times when daylight faded and he was totally blind to everything around him, and

he groped as a blind man indeed, feeling ahead of him with his cane.

"What are you pointing at?" she asked, anxiously scanning his troubled face.

"Nothing. It seemed like—I was blind."

"You can see me, can you not?"

"Yes; and feel you, too, which is better"—hugging her arm close in his.

Then he stopped short, and looked dazed and helpless. No wonder, for the sidewalk was rising up to meet him, and the trees danced and skipped about him like girls around a May-pole.

"Let me call a carriage?" she cried, for he reeled on his feet.

That brought him back, and he said, determinedly:

"No; I can make it."

"But why should you struggle on like this, when we would better ride?"

"Because I am well," he said, with a feeble laugh, "and want to exercise a little."

It was not in her heart to deny him anything, and she would not cross him in this; so they walked on, and reached the station and went into the little crowded waiting-room to find every chair taken, and some convalescent soldiers lying on the floor.

Slowly making his way to the corner, Oswald deliberately sat on the floor, and braced his back

against the two walls that met there, and threw his head back, a picture of exhaustion and suffering.

"Oswald! Oswald!" his sister said, standing over him and reaching out her hands to help him up. "You must not sit there. I will send for a carriage. We will go—"

Oswald heard no more. Falling forward, he would have struck his head against the iron seat, had Miss Lou not caught him as she knelt at his feet. She did not scream, nor cry aloud; but with white face and set lips, gathered him into her arms, and waited.

In the room were a score of soldiers—some going home, some returning to their commands, and some on a leave of absence from the hospital-grounds.

"If you please, let me help you," said one, offering his assistance to Miss Lou.

"If I can only get him on the cars, and home," she said, gratefully accepting the offer.

At that instant the train rushed into the station; and after all the rest had found seats, Miss Lou was able to get her precious burden on the car and into a seat, pillowing his head on her shoulder, and having a window raised that the soft air of that mild September day might fan his face as the train dashed away to Carondelet.

Just before that place was reached, he lifted his head, and said, smiling faintly :

"I thought the depot had been washed away in a flood, and I was rocking on the billows. Did you hear me scream?"

"Never mind, brother; it is all right. Put your head right back here on sister's shoulder, and sleep."

"But how did I get on, anyway? I do not remember it."

"Never mind that. We are flying toward home. I am watching you; never fear. When we get home, what a long, long rest you will have!"

Oswald did put his head, throbbing with pain now, back on her shoulder; but when she had ceased speaking, he looked in her eyes a moment, and said, dreamily :

"Is it a dream? Am I on my way to heaven? Are you an angel?"

"Never mind, now," she said, soothingly. "Wait, and see."

Then he slept again; or, if not asleep, was so quiet she thought he was. And then they rolled into Carondelet, and were helped into an omnibus, in which they crossed the river; and after an hour's delay they were on the train that would take them straight to Shepherdstown, to Miss Lou's beautiful home.

Oswald remembered getting off the cars at Carondelet. His next conscious moment came to him in his own room, in his own home; and by his side was his faithful attendant—his sister. Not so fresh and beautiful as when he saw her first, for three weeks of waiting between hope and fear, three weeks nursing him day and night, three weeks of daily letter-writing and receiving callers, had dimmed the sparkle of her eye, and had brushed the ruddy rose from her cheek; but Oswald did not see that. He saw only the love-light that flashed into his eyes when he opened them and recognized her.

“He knows me now!”

This she said in a low tone to a lady who was in the room with her.

“May I speak to him?”

“Oswald, do you know me? and are you better?” his sister asked.

“Never was better,” he said feebly. “Have I slept long?” and he glanced about and felt of his bed-covers, to make sure of his surroundings.

“So long—O so long! We were almost afraid you would never wake.”

“And this?”—he looked at his sister, and then at the ceiling and the walls.

“This is home—your home!”

He closed his eyes, and she hastened to say:

"Oswald, would you like to speak to my friend here? She has come many miles to see you."

He slowly bowed his head in assent.

"This is my friend Miss Laura Lawrence."

"Do you remember me?" Miss Laura asked, coming to the bed, and taking his hand in hers.

He did not reply, but smiling, gathered her hand in both of his, placed them under his face as he snuggled in the pillows, and for a little while slept again.

Miss Laura sat by his bed, and waited until she could withdraw her hand without disturbing him.

"He breathes easier, and does not moan as when he is flighty," Miss Lou said, and then turned a brighter face upon Miss Laura than she had shown during the two days she had been there.

"Will you stay over to-night?"

"I think not. The boys are likely to come home any day now, since they are in the State, and I want to be at home when Jakey comes. I must take the afternoon train. Let me see—I have three hours yet."

"It is so kind of you to come. I knew you would be glad to hear, so I sent the message the day we got here."

"It is a pleasure, I assure you, to be here. Tell Os—Mr. Smith about Mrs. Jenkins, will you, as soon as he can bear it? She is so anxious to see him. She grieves for him as for her own child. She said she had a very important paper to give him, but would not trust it with any one but himself."

"A scheme, perhaps, to get him there," said Miss Lou, as plans for forcibly detaining him there flitted through her mind, and frightened her.

"O no! Mrs. Jenkins is not that kind. He was, perhaps, but not she."

"If he goes, I will go too," said Miss Lou, decidedly.

"Do! Just the thing! Then I will go too. The drive will be a lovely one this fall-time. The roads are as hard and smooth as a pike, and the woods are beautiful. We will drive down in our carriage, and take our lunch along with us, and spread it at Mrs. Jenkins's. I should think Thee—Mr. Smith would enjoy that."

"What a schemer you are!" laughed Miss Lou in spite of her forebodings. "I suppose if we do that, we will take Babbitt and Jakey along, too?"

"Of course. Mr. Carl will go in his spring-wagon, and take the baskets. That is a good

suggestion, Miss Lou," laughed Miss Laura, softly but gaily.

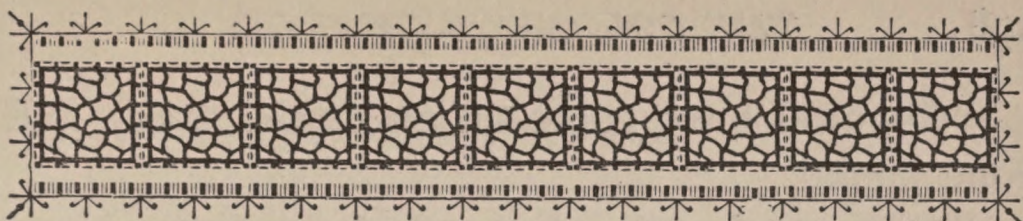
"But Mrs. Jacobus?" said Miss Lou.

"Well, poor woman!" speaking sadly. "I can not say. Hers is a sorrowful case. We did think she would not live to see Jakey, but I guess now she will."

"But what do you think Mrs. Jenkins means about 'a paper?' What can she have that concerns Oswald? Surely none of my father's papers of value were with him when they found him."

"Well, we will see."

And so they did, and were surprised.



Chapter XXV.

A SHARP SWORD.

OSWALD recovered slowly; for when his sister was surest that he was steadily gaining, then would come a most disheartening relapse. Some days, when his variable appetite seemed strong and reliable, and when tempting food had been eagerly taken, the afternoon would bring languor, fever, delirium, and prostration to Oswald, and fearful forebodings to his sister.

It was such an afternoon as that when the colonel returned, relieved of his command; for they had all been mustered out, and had returned to their homes.

"And how is Oswald?" he said, after warmly greeting his sister in the hall.

She shook her head, and hid her face on his shoulder, her tears choking her utterance.

"Not worse?" he exclaimed. "Why did you not wire me?"

"I am afraid he is," she sobbed.

"I would have come on an earlier train, and gone back."

"I know, but he has only been worse since noon."

"Let me see him!"

"Yes, but, brother—" and she held him back, as he was about to mount the stairs. "The doctor says he must have perfect quiet. Do not excite him."

"Trust me for that, sister."

Together, arm in arm, they softly entered Oswald's room. The attendant retired, and left the three alone.

Bending over Oswald, Colonel Smith watched his face, listened to his breathing, and softly felt his pulse. Turning to his sister, he said, with a reassuring manner:

"A natural sleep."

"And he is better?" she asked, in a whisper.

"Not in any danger, certainly," he said.

Sitting by his side they watched and waited for awakening, noting every symptom; and the day wore away into night, and night was fading into daylight, when Oswald opened his eyes. He did not see his sister, as he thought he would; but above him bent a face that was both strange and familiar, so he smiled, and closed his eyes.

"Oswald!" The voice was tender, but strong and hopeful.

"Brother!" he answered; but dared not open his eyes again, fearing it was all a dream, and the vision would disappear if he looked.

"That is all!" and a hand, cool and sympathetic, pressed his forehead, while another clasped his hot fingers. "Be quiet, and sleep—or rest."

It was not a dream!

Thus soothed, Oswald did sleep again. He wanted to stay awake, but could not, so heavy was the stupor upon him. When he awakened, daylight, softened by nicely adjusted curtains, filled the room, and the perfume of delicate flowers delighted his heart. A sweet breath of air touched his face, and wafted to him cooling odors of fresh and soothing sheets and covers. At his head he heard the almost suppressed breathing of one whose presence he had learned to love, and to know by a subtle influence he could feel, but could not understand. At his side he heard the regular and confident inspiration of one he had hoped so long to find as kind as he knew he was brave and true.

"Better?" asked his sister.

"Undoubtedly," said his brother.

"Did he know you?" she asked.

"I think so," he said, just a little doubtfully.

Then Oswald stretched out one hand toward the voice, and lifted the other to touch the face above his.

On his knees the colonel lifted up his voice, and said :

"We thank thee, Lord, and will ever serve thee with grateful hearts, for this great blessing. Save our brother from death, and make him a true and loving disciple! For Jesus' sake. Amen."

Then Miss Lou kneeled, and said :

"Father in heaven, mercifully hear our prayer. Bid this fever subside, and may our dear brother never again leave us, for with thee is all power on earth and in heaven! For Jesus' sake. Amen."

Oswald opened his eyes now, and was delighted to find that his vision was clear, and his mind steadier than it had been for days and days.

"He is better!" his sister said, joyfully.

"O yes!" the colonel said, with undisguised pleasure. "The Lord is a very present help in trouble."

"We have both asked the same thing of him, and he can not deny us, for his promise is to 'two or three who unite.'"

"Where is God?" said Oswald, forcing back the peace that began to fill his soul, as he

yielded to the influence of the prayers he had just heard.

"Everywhere!" said the colonel, promptly, not suspecting the doubt that suggested the question.

"Can I not see him?"

"No," said the colonel; 'for no man can see God, and live.'"

"Why not let me die, then?" said Oswald, with a sharpness of voice and manner that was strange to his sister; for he had been so tender and affectionate in manner and speech.

"There! there!" said the colonel, scarcely knowing what course to take. "When you are stronger, we will talk that all over."

"No, tell me now."

"What, Oswald? What, my brother, dear? What do you want us to tell you?" his sister said, soothingly.

"Why not let me die, and see God?"

"You might not," said the colonel, wondering why he should attempt to argue with so sick a young man.

"What?" said Oswald, and his face grew hard.

"'Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God,'" said the colonel, repeating the passage, because at that instant it passed before his mind.

Then was Oswald thrust through and through by that sharp sword of the Spirit. He was conscious of an impure heart, though he believed no one knew it but himself; for he had always felt an abhorrence for outbreking sin. After a momentary struggle with himself, he asked:

"Who are pure in heart?—anybody?"

"'They in whose eyes a vile person is contemned, but who honoreth them that fear the Lord,'" the colonel said, quoting from memory from the Psalms.

Then Oswald groaned inwardly, though not a sound escaped his lips. He did condemn a vile person, he thought; but he did not honor them that feared the Lord. Then he was not pure!

"Never mind, dear," his sister said, tearfully, for her fears had mastered her faith; and then to the colonel she said: "I fear his mind is affected. He has never talked like this before."

"No! no!" Oswald said, with surprising vigor. "My mind is all right. I am better than I have been for weeks. I am myself, or getting to be. That is why I talk so. You will hate me, I know; but you must know the worst. There is no God for me!"

Miss Lou hid her face in the pillow, and for one little moment wished she had never found

Oswald. But the colonel was undaunted, and said, soothingly:

"Do you really feel better, Oswald?"

"Ever so much."

"Better than yesterday?"

"Yes."

"Better than this morning early?"

"Yes, brother."

"Why, do you think?"

"I do not know."

"Have we done anything for you?"

"O yes! much, very much."

"What?"

"O, so much I can not tell."

"May I?"

"Yes, if you want to."

"We prayed for you!"

The colonel's manner was so earnest, so confident, so kind, that Oswald could do nothing but look at him steadily for a minute. Then he said:

"Do you think that made me better?"

"I do."

"Why?"

"Because 'the prayer of faith shall save the sick.' "

"But some prayers are not answered."

"Yes."

"Well?" said Oswald, inquiringly.

"Well?" said the colonel, firmly.

"That proves—" faltered Oswald.

"Go on; that proves—" said the colonel, helping him.

"That proves—" again faltered Oswald.

"If it proves anything," said the colonel, "it proves that some prayers are answered. For if some are not, then some are."

"I see!" said Oswald, and a gleam of satisfaction lighted his face, but it vanished instantly.

"And if some prayers are answered," urged the colonel, pressing his vantage firmly, "we know there must be an Answerer."

"I see!" said Oswald, another flash of pleasure lighting his face.

"And the Answerer is God," said the colonel, earnestly, "for our prayers are made to him!"

"Yes," said Oswald, sighing resignedly.

"Do you believe now?"

"I am afraid to," he said, and his face darkened again.

"Of what?"

"Am afraid it is not true!"

"What time I am afraid," said the colonel,

"I will trust in the Lord."

"How can we trust when afraid?" said Oswald, anxiously.

"When afraid, we trust—that is, believe,

when everything is against belief; and then, after a little while, we find our trust outlives our fears, and we know by that that it is real and touches life, for it lives!"

"See, brother!" said Miss Lou, kneeling by his bed and caressing his hands. "We feared you were lost, but when we heard you had been saved from the water, we trusted God to bring you to us. We prayed and feared, but trusted still. And—"

"And," said the colonel, finishing what Miss Lou could not say for her emotion, "you are the best answer our prayers ever had!"

"Perhaps," said Oswald, timidly, "if I could have—my—that is—if I could ask for—something, and get it—I would—"

"You may!" said his sister, quickly, as she guessed his meaning. "You may have an answer to your own prayer, and then you will know."

"That is it!" said the colonel. "'If any man will do his will he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God.'"

"But let us put this aside, dear brother," said Miss Lou, "for I am afraid it will worry you. Just promise me one thing. You will follow every good impression?"

"Yes! yes!" said Oswald, eagerly.

"And promise me one thing?" said the colonel.

"Well," smiling faintly.

"That you will not resist the truth."

"I promise."

"Then you are safe, for the truth shall make you free!"

"What is the truth?" asked Oswald, anxiously.

"Jesus of Nazareth is the truth. Yield to his guidance, and all is plain."

"I can not see—I can not—"

"Which way are you looking? If you look at the wall, you can not see anything but the wall. If you look at the window, you see the window, and through the window, and all that is outside—the earth, the sky, the stars, and the universe. Jesus is the light—the window. Look toward him and see him, and through him see God! Try it."

"His fever is all gone!" said Miss Lou, passing her hand over his face, and then grasping his hands in hers.

"I believe it is," he answered. "I see better and think better and feel better."

"Does not all this talk worry you?" she asked.

"No, it rests me. I have been tired so long—been tired of nothing."

"I understand," the colonel said, warmly. "You have been starved and burdened. Now

you are to be fed and relieved, and are to have something all the time."

"That's the doctor," said Miss Lou, as they heard his voice below.

"How now!" he said, in surprise, as he examined Oswald's pulse, looked at his tongue, and put his hand on the patient's head, glancing inquiringly at the colonel and then at Miss Lou.

"What do you think?" asked the colonel.

"Think! I do not think! I am astonished! I expected to find him—well, I did not expect to find him like this!"

The next day the doctor came again, and also the next; but as Oswald so rapidly improved he dismissed the case, and said:

"He was only grieving for his brother!"

And so he was, but not for his brother, the colonel of the regiment; but his Elder Brother, the King of kings. When he came he brought healing of mind and body.

About the middle of October, when Indian summer had commenced, so strong was Oswald that a telegram went forward to Miss Laura, saying:

"Meet the noon train, to-morrow.

"LOU AND OSWALD."

Miss Laura and Jakey, Mr. Carl and Babbitt, and several intimate friends, were at the depot

when the noon train came in; and the colonel, returning from Chicago, met them the next day, and went with them to Mrs. Jenkins's house, intending to come back by way of George's home; for there had been some great plans laid by Oswald since his convalescence, and all the Circle were needed to carry them into effect. Their visit to Mrs. Jenkins modified, but did not interrupt, the good work proposed.



Chapter XXVI.

A MARKSMAN'S SKILL.

THAT was a happy party that started for Mrs. Jenkins's home, a little before sunrise, the next day. The distance to be made—twenty-five miles—was not considered great; for the roads were smooth and hard most of the way, and the teams were of the highest order of roadsters, and the vehicles were comfortable and light.

Mr. Carl and Babbitt, Colonel Smith and Jakey, were in Mr. Carl's open carriage. Oswald and Miss Lou, Miss Laura and Mrs. Carl, were in Judge Lawrence's covered carriage. This is the arrangement the colonel insisted upon, and all the others acquiesced in; though Jakey thought he ought to drive the judge's carriage, and not sit in the back-seat of Mr. Carl's conveyance with Colonel Smith, leaving Miss Laura to hold the lines, and taking the colonel away from his brother.

Babbitt would have been pleased to have all

the young folks in their conveyance, and all the older ones in Judge Lawrence's carriage; for he was sure Miss Laura and Oswald, Jakey and himself, could drive time faster than the horses could draw the light vehicle. But that could not be, for Oswald needed the better accommodation of the carriage; and Miss Laura insisted that she understood driving her father's horses as no one else did, and she must drive them.

Oswald was quite content. To be with his sister was joy enough. To listen to the vivacious talk of Miss Laura was like a gentle stimulant. She was not as old as he had supposed, and was surprised to know she had not completed her studies at school. When he met her at his sister's home, he thought she was about the same age as his sister. He saw now his mistake, but no one had told him before.

As for Miss Laura, she found Oswald older than he had been represented to be. She had thought of him as of Babbitt's age—her junior by full three years—a mere boy. But now she saw that she was out in her reckoning by at least six years. It made her blush to recall the patronizing air she had manifested when she hastened over to Miss Lou's to see him.

As for Miss Lou, she was not wide of the mark in any of her guesses, and now secretly enjoyed the partly hidden but very easily dis-

cerned confusion of the two young folks, as they endeavored to correct their past mistakes.

The colonel was solving several questions as he rolled along the prairie road, talking to Mr. Carl, and measuring both Babbitt and Jakey. He decided that Jakey could be trusted with any responsibility, where carefulness and attention to details were necessary. He thought he knew where he could place Jakey with assurance of success.

As to Babbitt, the colonel felt convinced that he was adapted for a position requiring quickness, decision, and perseverance, joined with amiableness and ambition. He was sure he could place him, if his father would only consent.

Then he fell to meditating of George, and smiled broadly as he pictured the Little Corporal's mess, all quartered under his protecting and nourishing care, with its least member become its chief; for was not Oswald heir to a larger fortune than he himself had been counting on? For the past few days had been spent by him in getting a just estimate of the value of the estate.

When noonday came they were still on the prairie, but in sight of their destination; and within an hour's drive were the woods where they had planned to stop for lunch.

"I begin to feel at home," said Oswald, as

he caught sight of the dark line along the horizon, where the tree-tops of a familiar wood broke the clear blue of the sky.

"Why so?" Miss Lou asked, not knowing what had given rise to his remark.

"Those trees away off there remind me of some good old times."

Then a shadow fell over her face, for she was jealous of everything that divided Oswald's affections, and could not feel at ease if he did not constantly declare his preference for her home—his home now.

"Then you were sometimes happy there?" she said, with a little tremble of regret in her voice.

"Yes, when by myself in the woods; but not often."

For a minute there was silence, unbroken except by the dull rumble of the wheels over the smooth road, and the deadened clatter of the horses' hoofs along the highway. Slipping his arm along the back of the seat, and bringing it down on Miss Lou's shoulder, Oswald whispered, as he leaned against her:

"But I am happy with you all the time!"

Instantly the cloud burst, the sun gleamed, and softly caressing his cheek, she answered, so only he could hear:

"So am I!"

"My!" said Oswald, brightening, and straightening up. "We shall have a turkey-dinner tomorrow or next day, I am thinking, at both my homes!"

"Both homes!" echoed Miss Lou.

"Yes; my real, real home, and my make-believe home—Mrs. Jenkins's."

"Do you call that home?" Miss Laura asked.

"Well, it is n't so awfully bad now, I guess, since—since—Mr. Jenkins is not there."

"But what suggested turkeys to you," Miss Lou asked, "when Thanksgiving is a month away?"

"The woods. That piece of woods is full of turkeys."

"Whose? Mrs. Jenkins's?"

"O no!" laughed Oswald. "Everybody's—anybody's—whoever can get them."

"I never heard of such a thing!" Miss Lou said, looking at her brother incredulously.

"You did n't, truly? Never heard of wild turkeys? Well, then, I shall show you some, unless I miss my guess."

"O, wild turkeys! Yes, I have heard of them, but never saw any."

"Just you wait!"

With that, Oswald settled back in the cushions, a bright spot burning in each cheek as he thought of the coming opportunity to show his

sister and Miss Laura how much of a hunter he was.

Babbitt had thoughtfully put his father's fowling-piece in the wagon, hoping they would see some prairie-chickens on the way, and Oswald knew the gun was along.

It was past one o'clock when they stopped in the woods, nearly exactly where Mr. Carl and Miss Laura had stopped on their trip down the first time.

"I want to show sister and Miss Laura a corn-field, not far off," said Oswald, after all were out of the vehicles, "and will take the gun along. Do not come near any of us if you hear us shooting, for we will see who can hit a mark, and may be firing toward you."

"That's hardly fair!" said the colonel. "We want the ladies to spread our lunch."

But Oswald only waved his hand deprecatingly, and slowly led the way through the underbrush, following a familiar path, which was so narrow that they were obliged to walk singly. After a little they came to a corn-field, the yellow stalks, pendent leaves, and drooping ears swaying gently in a soft wind that blew up the valley that extended to the open prairie beyond.

"Now, you must do just exactly as I say—will you?" he asked, turning to the ladies.

"Yes," said Miss Lou, languidly, sitting on a convenient stump, "unless it is to go farther. I am tired out now, and know you can not stand it either."

"Never mind me."

"What shall we do?" asked Miss Laura.

"Sit flat on the ground, and crouch behind the biggest stump near you, when I say, 'Hist!'"

"That 's easy," said Miss Laura, laughing.

"And don't laugh, or even whisper!" he added.

She quickly clasped her hand over her mouth, and Miss Lou looked on approvingly, as the two young folks stood a few paces ahead of her. Miss Laura was gazing admiringly at Oswald; but he was watching the corn-field, and seemed oblivious of her presence. The corn-field was right in the midst of the woods, completely surrounded by tall timber.

"See that!" said Oswald, excitedly, shouldering his gun, and starting off rapidly.

"Hold on!" cried his sister, preparing to follow.

He stopped, looked back, motioned for silence, and when they had come up, said:

"Follow, but say not a word, and mind me."

"What did you see?" demanded Laura, in a whisper, peering in the direction he had been looking.

"Turkey!"

"Sure?"

"Yes, but be still!"

"Why, Oswald!" said his sister, reprovingly, but in a low tone. "What will Miss Laura think!"

"Be still!" said Oswald, pausing a moment to speak to his sister, and then hurrying forward on tiptoe; avoiding dry sticks that would break under his feet, and stooping low when in an open place. The ladies followed close behind, holding their skirts away from projecting snag and entangling thorn.

Piff! Bang!

"O!" screamed Miss Laura, as the gun was fired right in front of her, for she had not seen Oswald stop and put it to his shoulder.

"Oswald!" exclaimed Miss Lou, rushing up, "are you hurt?"

"Be still!" said Oswald, frowning, holding the smoking gun in his hand, and glancing here and there through the tree-tops.

"Did you get the turkey?" queried Miss Laura, rallying from her first fright.

"Be still!" he said, rather sternly, and then explained: "Not *a* turkey, but a dozen! Now, crouch here, behind this stump, and do not show your head for your life! Take off your hats. That's it! Now, wait."

They obeyed, though a ludicrous spectacle they presented. Fortunately, no one was near to see them, and they did not care.

Oswald was a few paces ahead of them, sitting flat on the ground, his back against a tree, his coat-collar turned up, and his hat pulled down behind, but turned up in front, hiding all but his eyes and cheeks.

"Konk, konk, konk!"

"I hear one!" whispered Miss Laura, as the familiar cry of a turkey broke the stillness. But she did not hear a turkey, for it was Oswald imitating one.

"Pee, pee; pee, pee!"

"That is a little one," whispered Miss Laura, again. And she was right.

When Oswald shot into the flock, they scattered in every direction, as he expected they would. They were too far away for him to kill any, so he sat down to call them back in range of his gun.

"Konk, konk, konk, konk!"

This time it was the mother-turkey herself calling, though the ladies could not tell the difference between that and Oswald's call.

"Pee, pee; pee, pee!"

The response came from many directions, and Oswald knew the half-grown turkeys were coming back to the feeding-place.

Just then Miss Laura peeped above the stump, and saw a half-grown turkey running as fast as his legs would carry him, straight toward the gleaming barrel of the gun leveled at him. Forgetting her orders, she straightened herself up, and putting her fingers in her ears, waited results. A puff of smoke—the turkey dropped! She clapped her hands, and shouted:

“He did! He did!”

“Be still! Sit down! Hide yourself!” said Oswald, looking around.

“Konk, konk, konk!”

This time it was Oswald calling. After a silence of a few seconds, the answer came from different directions, and the turkeys came trotting toward the ambush. First, the mother-turkey, then two young turkeys, then the old gobbler, and then another young turkey, and then another. All were shot in quick succession; for their coming, in answer to his call, was so far apart that he easily slipped shells into the breech-loading gun, and took them all in.

“How’s that?” he asked, rising, his hands black and his face smirched with the powder. “Six turkeys, and never left my tracks!”

“Good!” said Miss Lou, enthusiastically.

“Where did you learn how?”

“Right here, in these woods!”

"Are there any more?"

"Yes, but I have shot away all my shells."

"How can we get them back to the wagon and carriage?" Miss Laura asked, for she was anxious the others should see the trophies of Oswald's skill.

"Once I could have carried them all myself, but not now," he said, for he was much fatigued.

"No, you must not. But what shall we do?"

"I will show you a path to take. It is n't far back to the road. You go, and tell Babbitt and Jakey to come."

"And leave you here!" his sister said, in fear.

"Of course. Tell them to halloo every few steps, and I will halloo back; and in that way they can find me, and the turkeys too."

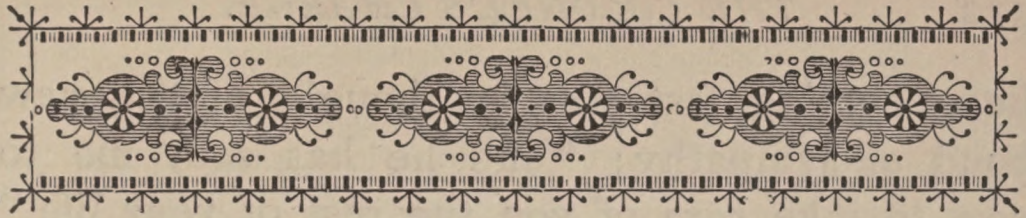
And so they did. But not only Babbitt and Jakey came, but Colonel Smith and Mr. Carl as well.

"It will make Mrs. Jenkins think of old times, to see me coming in with a turkey in each hand," Oswald said, as they started out to complete their journey.

And so it did; but her eyes were not on the turkeys Oswald insisted on carrying up to the house from the turn in the road, while the con-

veyances drove around to the big gate, but on the young man himself; for, though he walked like Theodore, and the turkeys reminded her of Theodore, his dress was so different, and his face so changed, that she did not know for sure until he said:

“Your boy has come back, Mother Jenkins!”



Chapter XXVII.

A GOOD WILL.

“THEODORE! Theodore! My heart has longed for you so!”

Mrs. Jenkins covered her face with her apron, and sank into the chair, leaving Oswald standing in the open kitchen-door, a turkey in each hand. These he carried to a table—as he had often done before with others—and then sat down by Mrs. Jenkins, and laid his arm affectionately around her shoulders.

“Have you missed me, Mother Jenkins?” he said, soothingly, as tears, trembling to fall, blinded his eyes.

“Only God knows how much!”

“‘Only God,’ Mother Jenkins! Do you believe in God?” he asked, for the words were spoken reverently, as he had never heard her mention that name in any way.

“O yes!” she sobbed. “How could I deny him?”

“So do I believe in him!” Oswald said, his

heart beating faster as he thought of this new bond of sympathy; "and he has sent me to you, to take care of you the rest of your life."

"Will you stay with me?" She lifted her eyes to his in astonishment, and a smile struggled over her anxious face.

"Yes, indeed I will, always and forever!"

"With *me*, Theodore?" Instantly her tears ceased, and a glad face supplanted the old one of hopelessness.

"Yes, or which is the same, you shall stay with me. I am not a poor boy, Mother Jenkins. I am rich."

"I know that, Theodore," and the storm subsided as quickly as it had burst upon her. "But I care nothing for riches. We have always had enough of everything, except love, Theodore."

"You shall have that now, Mother Jenkins; for I will love you, my brother will love you, and my sister will love you."

"Your brother! Your sister! Do n't tell me, Theodore, you have some one else besides me!"

The waves went over her soul again, and she sobbed in grief that was unspeakable.

"Yes, Mother Jenkins, God has kindly led me all the way, and has given me back to my dear ones."

"I did n't know that! I did n't know that! I thought they were only friends! They will take you from me!"

"No, no, Mother Jenkins! Where I go, you shall go. I have a beautiful home. You shall go there!"

"It is all a dream!" she said, rocking herself to and fro.

"It is all true!" Oswald said, tearfully. "My brother is here, and my sister too. Miss Laura and Mr. Carl are here. You know them."

"Yes, we are all here, Mrs. Jenkins," said the colonel, coming into the room; for they had tarried just outside the door, when they heard Oswald talking to her, and now all entered, and gathered about the two as they sat side by side.

"We are here to thank you, and to love you, for what you did for our precious baby brother," said Miss Lou, kneeling, and putting an arm around Mrs. Jenkins.

But that stricken heart could not look up. She heard their voices gladly, and yet with a pang of sorrow; for they were to divide Theodore's affections, and she wanted all his love.

"Look at me, Mrs. Jenkins," said Miss Laura. "You will remember me, I know."

"Yes, Mrs. Jenkins, and me too," said Mr.

Carl. "Oswald—that is—Theodore has never tired telling us about your kindness to him. We all love you for his sake, and are sorry for you in this lonely place. We have come to ask you to live with him."

"Can you not be happy now, just for Os—Theodore's sake?" asked the colonel.

"I will try," she said, behind her apron, still pressed to her face, and a heavy sigh escaped her lips.

"Let us go into the other room, Mother Jenkins," Oswald said, rising, and assisting her to rise, and then leading her into the front room.

The lengthening shadows told of night's fast approach. What could all that company do in so small a house—one so insufficiently provided with beds? But whatever they could do or would do, so far as sleeping was concerned, they must have something to eat.

Mrs. Carl and Mrs. Jenkins took that in hand, and difficulties disappeared rapidly.

The front room was commodious; and its furnishings very substantial and of excellent quality, though not rich or ornate. A huge fireplace was soon filled with wood, and a fire glowed and crackled, illuminating the room, and making the company move back, and move back again, until a larger circle was formed around its ample dimensions.

Oswald entertained his sister and Miss Laura by accounts of his home-life there, while the colonel and Mr. Carl discussed war news, leaving Babbitt and Jakey to give attention alternately to the war news and to Oswald's reminiscences.

"If George were only here!" exclaimed Oswald, during a pause in the conversation.

"Yes, indeed!" said Babbitt. "Then our circle would be complete."

"It will be, by and by," said the colonel. He did not explain what he meant, and no one asked him to explain; so all fell to meditating, gazing in the fire that now glowed in silence, for the logs had burned until only form and heat remained—an occasional dropping of a huge coal from the end of a stick making the only noise heard, except the subdued tones that came from the kitchen adjoining.

"Now, then, supper!" announced Mrs. Carl, after two hours had slipped by since the great fire was built.

A young turkey had been prepared, and graced the table, brown, and temptingly savory.

"This is unexpected!" said the colonel, as he paused a moment, looking at the game which Oswald's skill had secured.

"You do not know Mother Jenkins yet," said

Oswald, "or nothing in that line would be unexpected."

"Nor mother, either!" said Babbitt, for he could not let her miss the share of praise due for the feast set before them.

There was an abundance of other food, and all was nicely cooked, and most temptingly arranged on the table.

Without formality—indeed, with a kind of abandon—the supper was eaten, and was heartily relished by all. Oswald was particularly pleased. He was living a double existence, and reached backward as well as forward in his thought.

The quietest one was Jakey. He felt strange and lonely. All there had something of their own, except him. He was at their charge. He wished it could be otherwise.

"Mrs. Jenkins," said Mr. Carl, as they arose from the table—where an hour had passed almost unheeded—"may we all adjourn to the front room, and have a word of prayer?"

"We would be glad to, Mrs. Jenkins," said the colonel, before that lady could reply.

"I should like to," she said, simply, bowing her head, and speaking very softly.

A log of wood laid on the fire burst into a blaze quickly, and made a mellow light that gilded every piece of furniture, and softened the

features of all present, in harmony with the gladness of their hearts and the peace of their minds, as they listened to the repeating of the Psalm beginning, "The Lord is my Shepherd." Mr. Carl led in prayer, all devoutly kneeling, and Colonel Smith closed in a short but beautifully-worded ascription of praise. And thus was that house consecrated to God, and made sacred to Oswald forever.

Strange enough, no one had yet thought of the object of their visit—the examining of that paper which Mrs. Jenkins had said concerned Oswald.

There was so much to talk about—so many reminiscences of army life, and so much to ask Mrs. Jenkins of Oswald's history—that the hour of midnight found them still gathered around that fire-place.

"Where shall we sleep?" said Oswald, when some one suggested it was time to retire.

"My bed is ready," said the colonel, gaily, "and I will gladly share it with the boys here."

"All of us?" asked Oswald, in surprise.

"All of you. It is large enough for a dozen."

"O, I see!" said Babbitt. "The floor!"

"Correct. Such a floor as this, in such a house, with such a fire, would have been a bed fit for a king, at Donelson!"

"Or at Mattoon either, for that matter,"

said Babbitt, "some of those cold nights last spring."

"You bet!" said Jakey, shivering, in remembrance of those nights, and the hard bunks with scant covering.

"If you can sleep that way, I have great stacks of bed-clothing—blankets, comfortables, and such," Mrs. Jenkins said.

"That is all we ask," said Colonel Smith.

So on the floor the beds were made.

"We wish you ladies sweet sleep and pleasant dreams!" the colonel said, as they withdrew to the chambers above stairs, where were the only two beds in the house.

The morning dawned gloriously. The air was chilly with frost, but the sun shone brightly out of a clear sky. All declared they had never passed a pleasanter night. A plain breakfast was served; and then Mrs. Jenkins went to the little chest in which Mr. Jenkins kept his papers, and brought out the document they had come to see.

Colonel Smith took it, and read it over in silence first, for he at once saw it was a will. It was properly made and witnessed, and astonished him by its provisions.

"Do you know what this is, Mrs. Jenkins?"

"Yes, sir; my husband's will."

"Have you read it through?"

"No, sir; I have had no heart to."

"Have you read it at all?"

"Yes; far enough to see he had been kind to Theodore."

"To *me*!" exclaimed Oswald, in surprise.

"Yes," said the colonel, "he did not forget you, brother."

"In what way did he—" commenced Oswald.

"It is not long—let me read it," the colonel said, interrupting.

And then he read the will amid perfect silence.

To his wife, Sarah Jenkins, he gave all his personal property, "of whatsoever kind, to be hers to keep or to sell;" and also "the tract of land, described as follows"—and which was known to be the place where they were at that time assembled—"to be sold, if she shall so elect;" and "whatever money may be found in the iron-chest, except such as shall hereinafter be bequeathed.

"To Theodore Tompkins—the person known as such, though his real name is something else, and believed by me to be the son of a man named Smith, who was probably drowned in the Missouri River, from which fate the said Theodore Tompkins, *alias* Smith, was rescued by an unknown fisherman, and by me purchased and reared—I devise and bequeath, with a wealth

of unrequited affection, all the property owned by me in the city of Chicago, described as follows"—and then came the description of the lots—"as recorded in the office of the register of deeds.

"To Jacob Jacobus and wife, or to their heirs, if they should be dead, I devise and bequeath the following described tract of land, to be theirs and their heirs, to hold or to sell, limited only by the proviso hereinafter to be mentioned"—naming the tract—"and I also bequeath to said Jacob Jacobus and wife, or their heirs, the sum of five thousand dollars, which may be found in the iron-chest hereinbefore mentioned."

Then came a clause providing for the execution of the will, and the disposal of his mortal remains, in which occurred these words: "Could the grave of Theodore Jacobus be found, it is my will and command that it receive the same attention, in every particular, as given to mine."

"A remarkable document!" said Mr. Carl, when the reading was ended.

"A good will," commented the colonel. All the rest were silent. Jakey hardly comprehended the fullness of his share of the estate. Indeed he was not thinking of that so much as of the mention of his father's name; for, so far,

he had received but an imperfect and fragmentary account of the relation of the two families.

"Let me congratulate you, Jakey," said the colonel, advancing, and taking the boy's hand. "I do not know just where your land is, but I hope it is well situated."

Jakey moved uneasily in his chair, and said, awkwardly: "Land does n't do much good."

"That is so," said Mr. Carl, quickly guessing Jakey's meaning; "but we will share your happiness, Jakey. We will all be your friends."

Mrs. Jenkins was silently weeping. Drying her tears for a moment, and steadying her voice, she arose, and going over to where Jakey sat, she kneeled by his side, saying:

"Jakey, could you not learn to love me? You are alone. I am alone. I wish—I wish—I wish you would take Theodore's place."

"No! no! Not my place, Mother Jenkins! Not my place! Your heart is big enough for both of us!"

"But you will not stay with me!"

"No, but you will stay with me!"

"No," she said, sadly, still bowed by Jakey's chair. "It is wicked for me to push myself on you and yours. I love you, Theodore—I love you—for you were always good to me, but I want you to be free from me. I can only bring

dark thoughts to you. Let me have Jakey! I must have him for my very own! O sister! sister! forgive me, if you can!"

She sobbed convulsively. All were alarmed at the intensity of her emotion.

Mr. Carl said to the colonel, as they stepped aside to consult about the matter:

"I fear for her mind. She does not seem to know what she says."

"Very true. What shall we do?"

Though they spoke in low tones, Mrs. Jenkins heard their words, for she had sobbed herself quiet.

"No, Colonel Smith, I am not losing my mind. I know what I am saying and doing. Let me tell you all, and then you will understand. Help me up."

She reached out her hands, and, by the help of Colonel Smith and Theodore, stood up; and then sat down by Jakey, who was astonished into dumbness by what he saw and heard.

"There is one little thing to tell yet, and then you will know all of my sad story. You will hardly believe me, but I can show you proof. Jakey's mother—Mrs. Jacobus—was—was—my own sister!"

Again she was overcome by weeping.

"Poor woman!" pityingly said Mrs. Carl.

"I am so glad!" said Miss Laura. "My

heart ached for Jakey. But they can comfort each other now."

After awhile Mrs. Jenkins became calm, and it was arranged that she and Jakey should go to Colonel Smith's home, while he assisted in settling the estate; for Mrs. Jenkins had been named sole executrix, and needed his advice and help, not to mention the pleasure Oswald would find in entertaining them in his own home.

"I had thought of asking Jakey to come to our home, and become chief steward and butler; but I guess not now!" said the colonel, laughingly, as they prepared to leave that afternoon to go by and see George, Jakey having concluded to remain a day or two, and "come out" with his aunt.

"I would n't mind," said Jakey, smiling broadly, for his manner had changed wonderfully since he knew he was not a penniless orphan, but a nephew of a well-to-do aunt, not to mention his own legacy.

"I would, though!" said Oswald, decidedly.

"What will I do without Jakey?" said Miss Laura, looking out of the carriage at her loss, as he stood arm in arm with his aunt.

"You might get another orphan somewhere!" said Oswald, innocently, and he meant what he said.

"Perhaps!" said Miss Laura, blushing unnecessarily, and then added, "but I wouldn't want him to turn out an heir to a home."

"He might give the home to you! How would that do?"

"Oswald, I am afraid this trip will be too much for you," said Miss Lou, with solicitude, as she noted how wearily Oswald sank back in the cushions as the carriage rolled away.

"I am afraid so, too," he said, with closed eyes, his head thrown back against the seat. "I am not used to such romantic surroundings."

"How would you like to be where Jakey is?" his sister asked, meditatively.

"I have been there."

"Yes, but now?"

"Prefer this."

"What will George say when he hears about Jakey?"

"Great Scott!"

"Oswald!" said his sister, "I never heard you use such an expression before! You startle me!"

"You wanted to know what George would say, and I told you."

"O!"

"You are improving!" said Miss Laura, brightly, addressing Oswald. "I never knew you to be so light-hearted and gay."

"No wonder!" said Oswald, enthusiastically.

"Why?" she queried.

"I have swapped places with Jakey!"

"O!"

Miss Lou and Mrs. Carl smiled knowingly.

When they drove into the town of Oconee, just at nightfall, and stopped at the principal hotel, they found George waiting for them there, according to previous arrangement.

"Where is Jakey?" he demanded, as soon as they were in the reception-room, the hostler having taken charge of the teams.

"I must tell you about Jakey," said the colonel, and briefly narrated the facts, ending by saying: "So Jakey is coming along, in a few days, with his auntie."

"Great Scott!" said George.

Miss Laura and Oswald burst into laughter, and that worthy looked on in amazement, smiling in spite of himself, and asking, innocently:

"Is it a guy?"

"I am tired of buggy-riding," said the colonel, after supper. "The train leaves here at eight o'clock. We can be at home by eleven, and Mr. Carl can get home by half-past nine. I have hired two men to drive the vehicles through to-morrow. We will all go home to-night at my expense."

And so they did—in part. But Miss Laura and Oswald declared that a twenty-mile drive, the next day, would be an excellent constitutional for Oswald. The colonel, however, would not hearken to such a scheme.

"I am so anxious father should meet you, Miss Lou," said Miss Laura, as she and Mr. Carl and family were preparing to leave the car at their station. "Stop over to-night with us. He leaves for the East to-morrow, to be gone several weeks."

"But Oswald," pleaded Miss Lou; "I must go on with him, for I am really afraid he is fatigued already."

"He is, no doubt; so you both ought to stop."

"Do," said Babbitt, "and let Oswald spend to-morrow with me."

"You come up," urged Miss Laura; "that will tire him less."

And so it was arranged that the colonel and George went on home alone.

The evening passed pleasantly at Judge Lawrence's, after they arrived at ten o'clock, and midnight found them about to separate for the night.

"Excuse me, Miss Laura," said Miss Lou, as she was bidding her young friend good-night at the door—"your mother?"

"Mother went home before I could know her. Papa and I are all of the family."

"Poor child!" she replied sympathetically. "What home is there where death has not come?"



Chapter XXVIII.

A GOOD BEGINNING.

IT was June, after four years and a half had passed since the events of the last chapter.

For four full years there had been no war in the land, the last gun having been fired in 1865.

Business had developed rapidly, and no one had prospered more steadily than Colonel Smith.

"Let us go through the morning mail, Ernest," he said to his private secretary, "and then we will go down to the depot to meet the boys."

Ernest Henry had already run the letter-opener under the flap of each envelope, and had placed them on the colonel's desk for his inspection. He sat near by, with note-book in hand, ready to take down the replies his employer would dictate.

"Aha! Jakey writes they have struck a five-foot vein of coal on his place, and that it is of excellent quality. That will be the making of that town. So he will not be here for a week

or two yet. I must push on that railroad project. Jakey surprises me in his business capability. Never thought it was in him. Say to him, I wish him abundant success, and to command me for any financial assistance he may need. Got that?"

"All down, sir," said Ernest, smiling.

"All down!" the colonel exclaimed. "You did n't write what I said about him?"

"O no, sir! Do you not think I know you yet?" said Ernest, smiling; for he had learned to separate the colonel's confidential comments from his dictated replies.

"Here's one from Judge Lawrence. They sail for Europe the first of July, and may visit Palestine before they return. I hope they will. Lou always had a strong desire to visit the Holy Land. Say to him that I should certainly join them at New York, if I were not tied hand and foot here. I expect to have some leisure after awhile, but not now. I am glad Laura has finished her college course with such honor. I knew she would. Nothing she does surprises me. She is a very sweet girl. Tell Lou to be good to the judge, and bring him back safe. That will amuse the judge, and please her. Got it?"

"Yes, sir."

"All of it?"

"Not quite."

"That's right. Do n't put in what I say to you."

"No, sir."

"Ah, here's a letter from Mr. Carl! Fine old man. Never saw a happier man than he was when the war closed. His face was like the sun, that night he brought Babbitt down to our jollification over the surrender at Appomattox. He wants me to come up to their Sunday-school convention. Wonder if he thinks I have nothing else to do? If he does, he is fearfully deceived. Say to him, I will come. Would n't miss it for a small fortune—just to see his face shine, when the children sing. Ah me! He is a saint, and is 'most too good for this earth. Got it?"

"Yes, sir."

"Well, leave out that 'saint' business. It is a fact, but he need n't be told it."

"All right, sir."

"A letter from George. Wants to know whether he shall buy a big stock of flannels for next winter, at fifty cents on the dollar of their value. Rather hot day for flannels, but at that price, say to him, yes, and wire the reply; and add, 'Look out for moths!' He will understand. Wonderfully sharp buyer, if he does joke every hour of the day. Got it?"

"All down, sir."

"Not the 'jokes?' "

"Only the 'moths.' "

"All right. Keep the 'moths' down, and we are safe."

"Ah, a note from Laura, herself! Wants me to be sure and come to the convention, and make my home with her. That is just what I will do. Say so, please, and apologize for dictated letter. That is the only way I can get off."

"I have it, sir."

"Here is an offer for the Chicago property, from Briggs & Briggs. Tell the Briggses the property is not on the market. The price has doubled once in five years, and will double again. Fifty thousand is big money, but only half of a hundred thousand. Got it?"

"Yes, sir."

"What?"

"Property not for sale."

"That's right. That's enough."

"Have proposition to make them?"

"No. Let it go as you have it. What's this? Chaplain of the old Fourteenth wants an affidavit of service in the field. He will get it. He helped me to the ambulance, and staid with me a whole night afterward. Yes, he was there. Put it down on the 'specials' for this

afternoon. I will write it with my own hand. Got it?"

"Yes, sir."

"Ah! One from Mrs. Jenkins. Is afraid Jakey is spending too much money on that coal project. Well, she knows better by this time. Tell her to meet me at the Sunday-school convention. We can talk it over then. It will do her good to get out to the meeting. Is it down?"

"Yes, sir."

"The rest we must leave until we come back. Just have time to make the train."

The colonel's carriage drove up to the depot-platform just as Oswald and Babbitt left the cars. They were returning from Commencement at the university, where both had graduated. Though so much Babbitt's senior, Oswald did not have his knowledge of books, but was compelled to keep along in the same classes; for without Babbitt's patient review instruction, Oswald could not have finished his course in the four years.

Presently they were rapidly rolling toward Oswald's home.

"And now for business, I suppose?" the colonel said, after inquiring particularly about the Commencement exercises.

"I am anxious to begin," said Oswald.

"And I am anxious to have you. I need some one. I could not possibly leave to attend Commencement. Sister Lou was there, of course, and the judge, and Miss Laura?"

"Yes, they were all there."

"You enjoyed your run down to the sea, did n't you?"

"Ever so much. The week there has rested me wonderfully."

"Will you stay with us now, Babbitt, or visit home first?"

"I would like to spend one Sabbath at home," Babbitt said.

"Certainly. But I am so crowded that I am anxious to have you as soon as possible thereafter."

"I am afraid you will find me a hindrance for awhile. I have heard nothing for four years but Greek, German, geology, and such things."

"I will risk you where I want you to work."

A week from that time both Oswald and Babbitt were busily at work in Colonel Smith's store, the largest in that place. But neither of them had a suspicion of what lay just before them, for he had not yet fully matured his plans. Besides, he desired that they should be free to learn the details of the business in its

present aspect, and not be unduly exalted by the project he had in mind.

They were content to take inferior positions—just as any inexperienced employee would have done—waiting for promotion to come in the regular way.



Chapter XXIX.

A FINAL RECKONING.

“THEY are fine men, every one of them, Colonel, and you have a right to be proud of your charge.”

Judge Lawrence spoke earnestly and truly, and his words of praise were greatly appreciated by Colonel Smith, for he had striven zealously for twelve years to merit just such a commendation.

“It seems queer that it should be so, when considered in one light; and yet it is but the fruit of the seed sown and the plant cultivated.”

The two men were sitting in Colonel Smith's private office, in his Chicago business-house. Five years previously, Shepherdstown heard with deepest regret that the firm of Smith, Bro. & Co. would remove to Chicago, and engage in an exclusively wholesale business, having built a handsome block of stores on the site inherited by Oswald.

"Will you remain on the bench, Judge?"

"No; I have made up my mind to resign. I do not need the salary, as you know, and I believe I can devote my time to work which will bring better results to humanity. My wife is planning a system of relief for the worthy poor of the city. I can go with her; and, without offensive egotism, I think I can say that my name and presence will help her to reach the wealthy."

"Jakey made a good sale, I think, from what he tells me."

"Splendid! And those who bought him out have a bargain."

"Jakey is with Sister Lou in her scheme, she tells me."

"Yes, indeed. He is an indefatigable worker. Never says much, scarcely ever expresses an opinion, but after my wife has put her plans before him, he quietly carries out every detail, and brings back his report as modestly as one would who goes to market for a day's supplies."

"That remark about 'market supplies' reminds me—and I laugh at myself every time I think of it. Years ago, just after we came home from the army, I thought I would make Jakey steward at my home! Think of it!"

"Well, that is what he is now—a steward."

But not for you, nor me, but for the King himself."

"And his wife is just like him."

"Exactly. Never saw a better mated pair. Both quiet, both industrious, both sensible, both given to good works."

"Mrs. Jenkins is still with them?"

"O yes. She chafes a little at Jakey's reckless spending of money for benevolent purposes. He smiles and goes on, and lets her fret it out."

"Is your house ready, Judge?"

"We will occupy it about the first of October."

"And Jakey is coming too, then?"

"Yes; his home is next to ours."

"I have intended running out there ever since you wrote me you had bought, but have not yet."

"Will you go to lunch with me, father," said Oswald, coming in at that moment, "or go out home before that time? Laura is expecting you, I believe."

"Then I will go out there."

"I would go with you, except that I promised to lead the noon prayer-meeting to-day, and it is too late to make other arrangement."

"Never mind; I would n't have you miss that. You will be out at five?"

"Yes; or before, perhaps."

"By the way, Oswald," said the colonel, "do you know where Babbitt is to be next Sabbath?"

"At the North-side Mission in the morning, and at Trinity at night. He is to address the Alliance at Trinity."

"I hoped I could have him at our Sunday-school, Sunday morning. It is to be general missionary day."

"George has no engagement," suggested Oswald.

"Yes, he has," laughed the colonel.

"Where?"

"At our school. I put him down on the program the first thing. His face is a sermon that the children can understand. When he feels the pressure of the mission cause, as he talks to the children, his usually so happy face takes on such a sorrowful appearance that all hearts are moved by the sight. He is a phenomenon."

"By the way, Oswald, where will you be Sabbath morning?"

"At our church."

"Have no engagement there?"

"Nothing special. Thought I would like to be with father."

"O well, he will excuse you."

"Certainly, certainly," said the judge, "if you need him."

"Well, I do. Come over to our school. Give us a talk on—well—I would suggest Africa."

While they were thus planning for Sunday services, Oswald had stood, holding in his hand a mass of correspondence, about which he wished to confer with the colonel.

"Judge, here are all the morning papers. Excuse me a short time."

The brothers withdrew to an inner office, and gave attention to their business affairs. While thus engaged, Ernest Henry, the head book-keeper, brought them a statement of the condition of their business as shown by the records.

"I must show this to father," said Oswald, after they had gone over it together.

"Certainly," said the colonel; "or rather, I will."

"Here, Judge, is our latest reckoning."

"Satisfactory, of course?" he said, putting down his paper, and giving heed to the facts as read by the colonel.

"Entirely so."

"You think my investment here a safe one?" he asked, with a twinkle of his eye, addressing Oswald.

"Which investment, father?" asked Oswald, in turn,—“my sister, or your daughter?”

“No, no, foolish boy! My money.”

“Will buy you out at fifteen per cent advance on original cost,” said Oswald.

“Not to-day, my son.”

“Well, here are the figures,” said the colonel, after this by-play. “Retail department shows a gain in daily sales of \$2,565.17.”

“That is a new department?”

“Just added this spring. The manufacturing department, devoted exclusively to hotel and steamboat furnishings, shows a gain of \$15,375.25 for the month; and, the season for steamboats passed through, the hotels are excellent yet.”

“Good!”

“The wholesale dry-goods foot up an advance of twenty-five per cent over last month's business, and is nearly double that of a year ago.”

“Can you stand such rapid development?” asked the judge, anxiously.

“Yes; our foundation is solid. We discount all our bills at ten days, and make collections promptly.”

“Babbitt attends to that, I believe?”

“Yes; he is our ‘credit man.’ Our wholesale notion department is best of all. The sales

show a weekly gain for six months of nearly an even thousand dollars."

"Splendid! Who has that in charge?"

"George manages that department. He is a judicious buyer, and makes excellent selections. There is nothing shoddy or 'cheap' in his stock."

"Nor in him," said the judge. "It is a wonder he has never married."

"Devotion to his mother," said the colonel.

"That need not hinder."

"He thinks it does. She is queen in his home, and could not give up her throne to another without a broken heart; so George goes on, and gives her a wealth of affection from an undivided heart."

"Rare man!"

"So he is; and queer in many ways, but always queer on the right side."

"You have built up a splendid business, Colonel," the judge remarked, recurring to the matter in hand.

"So I have, and yet I do not take as much pleasure in the business as I do in those associated with me. The business may go in a day, or a night—is bound to go some time—to be supplanted by another; but these men are immortal. They can never be taken from me—not even by death. I love every one of them!"

"Yours has been an eventful and a useful life, Colonel."

"Eventful, surely. I hope it has been useful."

"It undoubtedly has been. Whatever became of your chief clerk at Shepherdstown?"

"It makes me sad to think of him. Bright, ambitious, capable of great things, he is to-day an outcast. Occasionally he comes here—for he followed us to Chicago—and begs for a job. I give him something to do in the basement, but he will not stay longer than a week. Drink, drink, drink! Everything goes for drink!"

"And his wife?"

"Dead! Poor girl, her heart was broken!"

"Have you Jones with you yet—your old book-keeper?"

"No. He would gamble; and finally I detected false entries in the books, and discovered he had been making collections and pocketing the proceeds. I dismissed him quietly, after talking to him and praying for him. He would make no promise of amendment, and I had to let him go."

"I remember you had a young man who left the store to study law. You talked to me about him once. What has become of him?"

"His is another case that grieves me like death. I paid his way through law-school. He

was brilliant, and succeeded at once; was elected to office, and then commenced drinking. He is a wanderer to-day. I saw him last summer, on the street here. He told me he was singing with a traveling patent-medicine troupe, and bragged about what a salary he earned. He was bloated and boisterous, and made me sick at heart. I counted much on his success."

"Sad, sad! Too sad!" said the judge, with a sigh.

"But over against those cases I put Oswald, Babbitt, Jakey, George, and Ernest, and feel amply repaid for all I have done and endured."

"Well you may! Well you may!"

"And there is one more that I count as my boy. He came to our store in Shepherdstown, and run errands for a dollar a week. He finally earned two, and then five. When we came here he left us, and went to the Biblical Institute at Evanston. He graduated with honors, and has a Church out West. He lived at our house until we came here. I notice, by the paper this week, that he is building a church to cost ten thousand dollars. I have jotted the fact down, and will watch for a notice of the dedication. Intend to be there."

"By the way, Colonel, when my wife was gathering up little odds and ends, preparatory to removing here, she came across a package of

letters and other papers that Mrs. Jacobus had at our house, and which had been overlooked; and in them found a certificate of purchase of a cemetery lot out in Missouri, and we are sure there is where their Theodore is buried. So Jakey is going out to investigate, and will put up a handsome monument."

"Indeed! That is surprising, and very gratifying to me."

"Yes; Mr. Carl is going out with him."

"Bless the dear old man!"

"I say, bless his wife! She was with us day and night when my wife was sick of fever."

"So I know."

"Lunch-time, and you here yet!" said Oswald entering just then.

"Reminiscences—reminiscences!" said the colonel.

They went out together, and two hours slipped by unheeded.

THE END.

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